CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING DISABILITY: DISCOURSES OF POWER, CONFLICT AND CHOICE IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ADMINISTRATION

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NICE includes an independent special school, supported by the Foundation for Conductive Education (a registered charity), but which charges fees on a non-profit-making basis. Set on the outskirts of Cannon Hill Park in Moseley, Birmingham, the Institute enjoys remarkably congenial surroundings. The following services are offered to children and adults with motor disorders as a result of cerebral palsy (CP), stroke, dyspraxia, multiple sclerosis, head injuries and Parkinson's Disease:

- Parent and child sessional services (age 0 - 3)
- Early intervention service (age 3 - 7)
- Primary-age group (age 5 - 11)
- Sessional placements (age 7 - 17)
- Dyspraxia service (children and adults)
- Adult services.

Also offered are carers' courses; outreach and consultancy services; training (BA Hons in Conductive Education); information services; publications; National Library of Conductive Education; talks; presentations; conferences and research symposia; visits to the Institute; and a world-wide interactive internet resource http://www.conductive-education.org

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ABSTRACT

For parents of children with motor disorders, there is controversy over selecting the most appropriate or preferred school, with decision-making power residing with special educational needs officers working for local education authorities. Problems arise when some parents specifically request an alternative pedagogy, that of Conductive Education, for their child. The objective of this research was to provide a social constructionist critique of the discourses that pervade the world of administrators who manage access to special education resources. One particular focus was the ways in which administrators reach decisions on school placement by exploring, via a qualitative approach, the meanings individuals construct when discussing their involvement in the statementing process. A dual methodological approach was employed, that of constructionist grounded theory followed by Foucauldian discourse analysis. Data for the grounded theory phase consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews performed with special educational needs personnel within local education authorities. Subsequently, these data were further strengthened by document analysis and participant observation notes obtained from observing the work of one local education authority, and these were used within the discourse analysis phase. Findings from the grounded theory methodology showed how administrators succeed in perpetuating children's educational and psychological disabilities through a variety of discursive methods. By using vocabulary couched in terms of equity and fairness, and by utilising governmental rhetoric of school choice and inclusion, administrators enlist parents and children in their own oppression. The subsequent discourse analysis showed how administrators adhere to the professionalism of contemporary practice in order to strengthen their arguments within decision-making, thereby ignoring the disciplinary and regulatory practices they enact. Enmeshed in a panoptic system of power, discipline and surveillance, they are so positioned as to discourage proper and absolute parental choice - and so it is why conductive education may be denied. However, the panopticon of special educational needs is challenged by the multitude of parental voices opposed to its disciplinary practices and it remains to be seen how resistant it will become in the face of such opposition.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CE	Conductive Education
COP	Special Educational Needs Code of Practice
CP	Cerebral Palsy
LEA	Local Education Authority
N5	NUD*IST5 (non-numerical unstructured data: indexing, storing, theorising)
NICE	National Institute of Conductive Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

'Each child with special educational needs who gets less than the best we can offer is an affront to both our society and our educational system' (Lord Rix, 2003).

1.1 An overview

This research is concerned with the problem of educational choice and explores the reasons why a child's placement at the parents' preferred school may or may not be granted. A review of the psychological and educational literature surrounding the statementing process for children identified as having special educational needs (SEN) reveals a lack of awareness of the individual contribution to the process made by education administrators from their own perspectives.

One specific case is that of Conductive Education (CE) for which parents of children with motor disorders request a placement for their child at an independent special school practising pure CE. One such establishment is the National Institute of Conductive Education (NICE) in Birmingham. The literature has shown that some parents may not be granted this opportunity (Owens, 2000), but explanations go only so far as to state insufficient financial resources. It is my contention that other explanations must be possible, as not all requests for such placements are refused. If this is the case, then this becomes problematic in an age in which legislation purports to take into account parental choice (DfE, 1996). If choice is to be furthered with regard to education, then how can this come about?

From a critical perspective, and in the words of Ford, Mongon and Whelan (1982),

> *'whatever the contribution made by philanthropy and philosophy, the substantial administrative changes* [to education and special education will] *be enacted by the Government only when the scales* [are] *tipped into necessity by the weight of social, economic and political pressure'* (p.22).

Changes which occurred in the first decades of compulsory education at the end of the nineteenth century saw the education of the handicapped being incorporated into the education of normal children, due to such social, economic and political demands (Ford et al, 1982). In the twenty-first century, although education remains mandatory for all children, and although mainstreaming is promoted for many children with SEN, real school choice is often limited for parents. But the recent upsurge in parental pressure groups might yet be seen to 'tip the scales' to enable such administrative changes in a similar fashion to historical changes. The voices of parents demanding choice might yet break the stronghold of the panoptic special needs system (see Section 10.4). Yet further research needs to be done in order to raise awareness of issues involved in school choice so that more parents may become empowered through knowledge.

The purpose of this research has been to provide a social constructionist enquiry into the experiences of education administrators who manage access to educational resources. These administrators were defined as any officers working for local education authorities (LEAs) who were either directly or indirectly responsible for decisions regarding the assessment, statementing and school placement for children with SEN. My objective was to explore their experiences of determining school placement, searching for the meanings these individuals construct for themselves within this process. These officers typically included SEN/statementing officers, educational psychologists, Heads/Managers of SEN and any other individual identified as having input in the statementing process. As the job titles and descriptions of these individuals were diverse, for the purpose of clarity in reporting, these individuals will be referred to under the rubric of 'education administrators'.

The questions that drove the research involved an investigation of the themes and categories constructed by the interplay between myself and education administrators which aid in an understanding of their experiences regarding school placement for children with motor disorders. One further research question sought to explain how power affects the nature of choice for parents seeking Conductive Education for their child (the research objective, aims and questions are clearly set out in Chapter five).

The statementing process for children with SEN takes into account children with various learning difficulties, including dyslexia, autism and cerebral palsy (CP). Since there are

now more alternative educational interventions for children with such difficulties, there is correspondingly more choice for parents, at least in theory. Indeed, recent legislation particularly addresses issues of parental choice (DfE, 1996; DES, 2001), but with an emphasis on choice of mainstream school. Recent governmental drives towards mainstream inclusion, however, appear to minimise consideration to those parents who actively seek alternative schools for their children as they believe that a non-mainstream placement would better suit their child's needs. Although there now appear to be more choices for parents of children with many learning difficulties/disabilities overall, the focus of this research was the choices available to parents of children with motor disorders.

My interest in this area developed as a result of findings from previous research, which demonstrated that some parents of children with motor disorders, when possessing a strong desire for their child to receive CE, were met with negative responses from LEAs. In other words, notwithstanding the rhetoric of parental choice, parents were sometimes not granted the school placement of their choosing (Llewellyn, 1999; Owens, 2000): their choice was denied.

I undertook a qualitative investigation to explore education administrators' understandings of the decisions they make during the statementing process. This was the basic question that drove the research initially, and was approached using a version of grounded theory underpinned by a social constructionist conceptualisation of social interaction. This paradigm maintains that an interaction is not understood to be a two (or more) way dialogue in which messages are transmitted, received and responded to as an accurate depiction of 'reality'. Rather, meaning is constructed at the point of interaction, as two (or more) individuals orient to the other's speech at that time and place. When people interact through speech, talk is a joint effort, not the product of intangible internal phenomena or psychic structures considered measurable by many mainstream psychologists (Burr, 1995). In this vein, the data gathered for the research was understood as a joint construction. An additional key question which took my analysis deeper involved asking how power affects the discourse of 'choice' for parents, and for this aspect, I conducted a Foucauldian discourse analysis, based on the findings which emerged from the grounded theory study.

1.2 'Voice' and thesis structure

Before briefly outlining the structure of the thesis it is important to note that I have chosen to write certain chapters/sections in the first person as, from a social constructionist perspective, I wish to make salient my own involvement in the process of research.

Social psychology has undergone a shift in emphasis: the relativism of postmodernism argues that 'reality' is constructed by individuals through language and other cultural signs (Burr, 1995); the person is understood more as a member of society, rather than a unique individual. Therefore, the researcher is every bit a part of this cultural construction (Ashworth, 2003), the thesis is considered an intersubjective product co-constructed between myself and the research participants (Koch and Harrington, 1998; Finlay, 2002; Russell and Kelly, 2002), and this is why reflexivity and a first person account of the research is considered important. By writing in the first person, my own reflexive involvement is illustrated, the self being integral to the process within a social constructionist paradigm (Horsburgh, 2003).

In addition, those who espouse an objectivist position adopt what Breuer, Mruck and Roth (2002:1) refer to as the 'rhetorical strategy of avoiding the use of the first person pronouns in scientific texts', thereby subtly advocating such use within a qualitative paradigm.

The nature of a postmodern research exercise allows the researcher to speak in his or her own voice. Finding one's voice is a vital contributor to exploring one's experience, memory and thoughts (Heaney, 1980; Bolton, 2001), and also brings the research alive, drawing the reader into its context. As Heaney (1980) states,

> *'finding a voice means that you can get your own feeling into your own words and that your words have the feel of you about them '* (p.43).

In this vein, reflexivity is demonstrated whereby my own theoretical ideas and insights are (either implicitly or explicitly) inherent throughout (Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, 1994; Burr, 1995; Smith, 1995), and the analyses are considered a joint construction between myself and the data.

Chapter two will initially explore issues of childhood disability by firstly identifying the problems within language use and secondly by providing a critical discussion of the various models of disability used as conceptual frameworks in this field of study. It will here be argued that models of disability have been historically and socially constructed and, as such, should be used with extreme caution when considering children in an educational sense. However, it will be evidenced that the use of models in disability discourse is not restricted to conceptual theorising. Rather the grounded theory analysis shows how models are used in an everyday way (and implicitly) by individuals. A third focus of this chapter will be to show how the term SEN is problematic in itself and may also be viewed as a social construct.

Following this, **Chapter three** will set the research firmly into context by exploring the statutory statementing process for children identified as having SEN, and by drawing on policies and Government guidelines. Moreover, problems inherent within the statementing process will be highlighted, which call into question the very process itself, such problems being implicated in lack of choice for parents. Also addressed in this chapter will be the recently emerging discourse of a market force approach to education. This will be critically discussed with reference to parental choice in the market place, as educational choice is of primary importance to this research. The notion of equity in both rhetoric and practice, and how this impacts on parental choice, will also be addressed.

The focus of **Chapter four** will be specifically concerned with childhood movement problems. The term 'motor disorders' will be explained, moving from descriptions of the cerebral palsies, their diagnostic problems and developmental implications, to a critical discussion of the educational opportunities afforded to children with motor disorders. There is a striking contrast between mainstream education, the more conventional special school environment and CE, all of which will be drawn together to summarise the overall aim of CE – dynamic inclusion. It is from this chapter that an understanding of why parents may choose alternative schools for their child with a motor disorder will come to the fore.

The fundamental nature of the research problem will finally be identified and summarised in **Chapter five.** In my construction of the problem area, this chapter will be a culmination of theory and research illustrated in the foregone chapters, in that the research objective,

aims and questions are clearly articulated. In essence, notwithstanding recent rhetoric of parental choice and movements towards mainstream inclusion, the evidence suggests that not all parents wish their child to be enrolled in mainstream or special schools and actively seek alternative education options. However, choice is viewed as a problematic construct and the research seeks to explore the reasons why parental choice of CE is sometimes not granted.

In order to provide a detailed but concise explanation of the dual methodologies used in this research, I will show in **Chapter six** how the research was approached in a phased scheme. The chapter will introduce the overall strategy of, and justification for, using a combination of complimentary qualitative methods, those of constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) for phase one and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1977) for phase two. In order to report the dual methodologies clearly, each will be described separately (chapters seven and nine respectively).

Chapter seven will focus on the version of grounded theory used from a social constructionist orientation, and its importance when addressing the first research question. The specific data collection method and procedures for phase one of the research will also be explained here. To complete the reporting of methodological issues for phase one, chapter seven will show how the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), specifically NUD*IST5 (N5), aided in an exploration of the data, and particularly the coding principles espoused for grounded theory analyses.

In **Chapter eight** I will present the entire grounded theory analysis, explaining how the joint construction of 'conflict resolution' is viewed as an essential aspect of education administrators' work that may all too often result in parents not being granted the school of their choice. This is shown to be primarily due to administrators searching for equity for all children in their decision-making in order to offset sites of potential or real conflict. However, what they do is to use a variety of discursive strategies to construct and maintain (notions of) disability.

In **Chapter nine** I will consider the methodology involved in phase two of the research (Foucauldian discourse analysis) and how it relates to the second research question concerning power within a discourse of 'choice'. I will also explain why this particular

discourse tradition was chosen over others, and the advantages and limitations of a Foucauldian analysis will be explored. Finally the discursive data/texts for analysis will be presented.

Chapter ten will present the Foucauldian discourse analysis which examines the ways in which education administrators are enmeshed in a system which purports to best serve children with SEN, but subsequently serves only to uphold and perpetuate a panopticon-type establishment. The panopticon was an eighteenth century architectural structure which epitomised prison reform of its time. Its concept has been used in postmodern analyses in equating intangible systems and institutions with the disciplinary power exemplified by the panopticon (see Section 10.4). The analysis is grounded on a conception of power relations and subjectivities available to education administrators and parents, which serve to affect parental choice of school. The analysis will also demonstrate, however, that parental pressure is viewed as a challenge to this panoptic system.

Chapter eleven will draw together the major findings from the grounded theory and discourse analyses (Chapters 8 and 10 respectively) as they relate to the research questions (see Section 5.6), to show how the experiences and language of education administrators result in the construction and maintenance of disability. Implications and practical applications of the findings will then be offered. Limitations and successes of the research will then be considered before moving on to examine quality criteria by which it may be evaluated. A note regarding reflexivity will finally be presented.

1.3 Summary and statement of originality

This then provides the overall nature of my research and the way in which it is reported here. The research is unprecedented in that it offers an alternative, critical perspective on issues of school choice for parents of children with motor disorders, presenting a social constructionist account of the experiences and understandings of education administrators working in LEAs. Such an investigation is absent in the educational and psychological literature, thus new insights have been gained. These insights provide the potential benefit of a new understanding, not only for parents holding and expressing a preference for CE for their child, but perhaps for all parents of children with SEN in general, education administrators and policy-makers alike.

This research is therefore expected to add to the body of literature and knowledge in the field of childhood disability and education provision. It provides a qualitative critique of the discourses, constructions and practices of education administrators who manage access to resources, situated within a social constructionist framework, a viewpoint hitherto un-addressed and unexplored.

1.4 Critical reflection

> *'Reflexivity refers to active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation'* (Horsburgh, 2003).

The extent to which reflexivity plays a part in the process and writing up of qualitative research is a contentious issue, primarily due to there being a multiplicity of 'reflexivities' which serve to confound researchers (Koch and Harrington, 1998; Lynch, 2000). It is therefore important to delineate the extent of my own reflexive standpoint, in view of the multifaceted experiences and reflections I may bring to the research. It is not uncommon to find contradictory accounts and opinions between researchers in the literature regarding the use of reflexivity within research texts. Certainly I do not wish to pursue a path of excessive reflexivity and infinite regression. Rather I will attempt within this thesis to provide a critical reflexive account of self, theory and method, looking both inwards and outwards to shared meanings, communication and discourse – a social constructionist account of reflexivity (Finlay, 2002). Having said that, I will define the specific value position I hold that I feel influenced my initial engagement with the research.

Firstly, how I became interested in the concept of 'choice' was due to challenging events in my early adulthood that ultimately led me to orient towards valuing highly personal choice and freedom of expression. Secondly, my interest in educational issues and how they connect with choice was spurred by my daughter's experience of being denied her initial choice of secondary school. There were no issues of disability or special educational needs, rather a matter of religion. The evidence to show that my daughter actively practiced her religion was devalued and overlooked by the board of governors who looked, instead, to the practices of her parent(s). It was only by bringing the authority of the church (our vicar) and a secondary school teacher (a trusted friend) to bear that she was finally offered a place at her chosen school. The theoretical point to make here is that decisions on school admission are made by many people positioned as gatekeepers who enact rules in order to

effect certain outcomes deemed beneficial to the institution, in this instance what it means to hold or practice a religious faith. However, it may be possible to influence the outcome of such decisions by detecting and deploying institutions or structures which match the power exercised by the gatekeepers. Such events draw attention to the need for an analysis of how people construct situated meanings together with an understanding of how power operates. Power in this sense is what Foucault refers to as disciplinary power which may be set to work and coordinated by individuals to support their own interests.

Finally, I had a vested interest in becoming qualified and experienced in the techniques of interviewing to subsequently conduct research in my own particular interest area. My training in psychology had taught me the value of always remaining critically aware of self in relation to others and, also how the objectivity versus subjectivity debate within the research community was controversial at very least with respect to qualitative research, and I intended to investigate further this controversy.

My choice of research therefore represents the culmination and synthesis of a lifetime's experience and search for personal worth and meaning within the context of being a single parent. The concept of 'choice' has been raised here, and it is important to acknowledge that this concept is not unproblematic. Throughout the research process, I took time to stand back from the data and the process of research to reflect upon my own position. I asked myself frequent questions about 'choice', such as what it might fundamentally amount to, how do we, as human beings, actually enact it, what is life like when we have none, what when we have too much? But is 'choice' just another socially constructed phenomenon, the function of which is to construct an illusion of betterment? At such times, I withdrew to reflect on my own understanding of choice and how I might bring it to the research. I concluded that my own ability to actively choose shifts, perhaps from one moment in time to another and, importantly, from one context to another. Ultimately, notions of choice may certainly be socially and historically constructed – the outcome of a variety of co-constructed understandings with the deployment of resources involving authority and knowledge – and need further investigation.

CHAPTER 2
CHILDHOOD DISABILITY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore issues of childhood disability by identifying the problems inherent within language use in the field of disability and then critically discuss conceptual models in disability research. The term SEN will then be critically discussed. It is argued here that models of disability and SEN are both socially constructed as their definitions and use are continually changing and subject to contextual interpretation.

2.2 Definitions and terminologies

Language exerts a powerful influence on each and every social process (Christensen, 1996). Thus human lives are influenced by a language that both constructs and reflects different viewpoints and understandings of the world. If children with SEN are to be included in appropriate values of social justice and not pathologised (Billington, 1996; 2000), then society must be transformed into one that views all of its citizens as individual, complex and whole. Yet educational and medical discourses incorporate many terms which serve to position individuals within relationships of power. Such power relationships and the positionings within them need to be explored and explained so that they may be brought to awareness and, henceforth, their effects may be studied. By doing so, spaces may be created in which resistance to oppressive educational systems, institutions and/or discourses may be brought to bear by parents.

To maintain clarity and understanding throughout the thesis, it is appropriate to define contemporary terminology used within disability research. It has been argued that the terms *disorder, impairment, disability and handicap* have particular meanings and that professionals should not use them interchangeably (Hall and Hill, 1996). According to the World Health Organisation (1980),

- a *disorder* is a medically definable condition or disease entity,
- an *impairment* is any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function,
- a *disability* is any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being, and
- a *handicap* is the impact of the impairment or disability on the person's pursuit or achievement of the goals which are desired by him or her, or expected of him or her by society.

However, there is some degree of overlap in the use of such terms, particularly when used colloquially, and these terms could be viewed as detrimental or distasteful to those individuals to whom they refer. They will be examined later in a critical discussion of models of disability as the use of language in disability research is fraught with problems (Hutchison, 1995). It will be evidenced that terminology in the area of SEN in particular, or indeed disability in general, can potentially be socially, economically or politically harmful.

The literature identifies two areas of concern surrounding the language of childhood disability in general but which are specifically connected to the context of this research. These include models of disability and SEN. These will be critically discussed, showing how both models of disability and the term SEN are socially constructed, before moving on to set the research firmly into context by exploring the statutory statementing process for children identified as having SEN. The first area of concern to be identified within childhood disability is that of 'models of disability' and it is to this issue that the thesis now turns.

2.3 Models of disability

Llewellyn and Hogan (2000) suggest that models are useful in disability research as an aid to understanding if they are compared in terms of their utility. Other researchers suggest that models act more as frameworks for thinking, rather than as plans for practice as, for example, in models of parent partnership (Appleton and Minchom, 1991). For example, the use of a particular model in disability research may show evidence of limited understanding of all the issues and misunderstanding may subsequently lead to

misapplication in practice. Theorists and practitioners should therefore be wary of applying any one particular model to any particular situation. Certainly, evidence for the use of various models in different guises appears to confirm that each may be a result of socially constructed concepts.

There are currently four models of disability: medical; social; systems theory; and transactional models. However new movements in disability studies are beginning to see the value of the formation of new models, in terms of 'quality of life' (Zekovic and Renwick, 2003), 'alliance' (Brett, 2002) or an 'affirmation' model (Swain and French (2000). Other theorists have posited an 'educational' model, as in CE for children with motor disorders (Coles and Zsargo, 1998). However, the medical and social models remain the most dominant to date and are the two more commonly drawn upon in both theory and research.

2.3.1 The medical model of disability

The medical model of disability stems from the disease model used in medicine, and views all disability as the result of damage or disease to the body causing physiological impairment, placing disability firmly within the individual (Coles and Zsargo, 1998; Copeland, 2001; Dowling and Dolan, 2001). Traditional interventions for individuals with a disability have therefore stemmed from a medically functional theoretical base. Typically, treatment for children with disabilities has involved input from a range of medical specialists such as physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and paediatricians (Taylor and Emery, 1995), all this being inevitably associated with a fragmented approach to treatment in which the whole person is ignored.

The medical model of disability, whereby a condition is treated, incorporates a fundamental belief that human beings are malleable and therefore treatable: the environment is not so changeable (Barnes and Oliver, 1993). Therefore individuals with disabilities have hitherto had to adjust to their environments. The expert model of parent partnership (Appleton and Minchom, 1991) is similar to the medical model of disability, in that professionals assess and treat a problem, paying little heed to the child or parent's viewpoints.

However, the medical model of disability has been shown to be problematic for a number of reasons. Some disabled people themselves object to being defined as different or abnormal, definitions implicit within such a model, and claim that dominant ways of theorising about disability should be rejected (Campbell and Oliver, 1996).

There has particularly been a growing dissatisfaction with interventions perceived as working uncritically within the medical model of disability (Read, 1998). Notwithstanding these objections and subsequent rejection by some of the medical model, it has been argued that the movement towards evidence-based policy and practice in the public sector will necessarily steer education and disability research in the direction of the medical model. This was the conclusion reached by Evans, Sharp and Benefield (2000), following a systematic review of interventions to support primary-aged pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream primary classrooms.

Twenty years ago, Ford et al (1982) argued that the medical model was the cornerstone of educational practices and administration but that the model hinders approaches to disability. Such a hindrance lies in the premise that once the problem is located within the individual, then other sites of analysis are effectively closed. Importantly, some parents of children with disabilities speak of the difficulties they face from a society which takes a deficit view of their children rather than a social view which accepts all people including children (Paige-Smith, 1997). Thomas and Loxley (2001) agree, stating that such a model is satisfactory in its place, such as in medicine, yet totally unsatisfactory when considering people in the context of their relationships and immediate environments. Such relationships are multi-faceted and, this being so, there are problems with locating the difficulty within the person and ignoring social factors.

Researchers taking a Foucauldian stance have shown how the construction of pathologising discourses serves to cement the deficit image of disabled people through language use (Liggett, 1988), and also through signals passed in the language and imagery of professional journals, textbooks, Government guidelines, training materials, policies, television programmes and so on (Chadwick, 1996:31). If society must change its underlying principles and conceptualisations of childhood disability, then concerted efforts should be made to construct new ways of seeing, understanding and talking about disability.

Importantly, some authors point out that social science disciplines have contributed significantly to the continued marginalisation of disabled people through their hitherto unquestioning acceptance of the legitimacy of the medical approach to disability (Barnes and Oliver, 1993). The strongest and most frequent argument has been for a complete rejection of the medical model of disability (Low, 1996; Oliver, 1996; Read, 1998; Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). These authors argue that work concerned with changing the individual ignores experience, events and other people. In other words, context and environment are ignored. To summarise, the medical model in itself is now viewed as a pathologising discourse, which is incomplete and limited in its applicability.

2.3.2 The social model of disability

In the 1970s, disabled academics within Disability Studies elaborated the concepts laid down in the document published by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), entitled, 'Fundamental Principles of Disability' (UPIAS, 1976). Its assertion that 'it is society which disables physically impaired people' (UPIAS, 1976:14) became a link in the framework which became known as the social model of disability.

The social model of disability holds that, contrary to the medical model, people with disabilities are oppressed by societal views of what is considered to be normal and, as such, it is society that must change, not the individual; de-emphasising the cause of the disability as stemming from the individual. The oppression experienced by many has led to the view that disability is socially constructed by a society that refuses to accept responsibility for the disabling effects experienced by people with impaired physical functioning (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). Social model proponents claim that an individual might have an impairment, but the experience of societal oppression results in the disability (Oliver, 1990; Morris, 1991). Oliver states that,

> *'it is not individual limitations of whatever kind which are the cause of the problem, but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation'* (Oliver, 1996:33).

But Swain, French and Cameron (2003) go further than this and claim that disability is actually constructed. They state,

> *'society is at fault, that is a disabling society that is geared to, built for and by, and controlled by non-disabled people - a society that excludes disabled people. This exclusion is created and constructed in every aspect of living, including ways of thinking, language, the built environment, power structures, information, values, rules and regulations'* (Swain, French and Cameron, 2003:2).

From this it is clear to see how terminology in this area is conceived as problematic (see Section 2.2).

Recently, social constructionist accounts have stressed the role of culture in the formation of attitudes towards those with a disability, rather than viewing disability as the product of interactions between people with and without impairments (Priestley, 1998). A review of the literature on social model theory by Tregaskis (2002) concluded that there are wide-ranging accounts given for the exclusion of disabled people in Britain today. However, it was argued that more attention needs to be given to develop theoretical responses towards the persistence of societal disabling attitudes, and also the problems disabled people face when working with non-disabled people. In this respect, Tregaskis (2002) suggests that the social model will continue to be of important practical use.

Within social model theory, one important distinction is made between impairment and disability which serves to emphasise the role of language and terminology used by workers in the field (see Section 2.2). Barnes (1991) states that,

> *'**impairment** is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment. **Disability** is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers'* (p.2).

This definition of disability is similar to the one given by the WHO (1980), yet with one added criterion, 'due to physical and social barriers', thereby stressing the importance of the social environment in constructing and maintaining disability. Moreover, there is no coverage of 'normal range', thereby reducing pathologising effects.

One positive outcome of the social model since its conception over thirty years ago has been that it has enabled people with disabilities to understand their experiences insofar as the discrimination and social exclusion they may face is no longer viewed as their own

fault. Rather, responsibility for such discrimination and social exclusion lies within a normalising society that has both developed and maintained social structures and mechanisms designed to create a docile workforce (Foucault, 1977). Within these structures and mechanisms, those individuals who closely conform to socially prescribed ideals of appearance and behaviour are rewarded, whilst those who do not, those who deviate from the norm, are pathologised (Billington, 1996; 2000; 2002).

Notwithstanding, the social model of disability has been criticised by many and there is a growing debate about its adequacy, in that some critics question whether it offers a complete account of the experience of disability (Morris, 1991; Low, 1993; 1996; Crow, 1996).

Postmodern research illuminates the pathologising and politicising effects of models of disability. A strong proponent of the social model of disability is Chadwick (1996), who used Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge and governance to analyse how both the medical and social models of disability can impact upon both the identities of people with impairments and local Government practices. Chadwick (1996) states how the Disability Discrimination Bill, later to become the Disability Discrimination Act (DfE, 1995), was clearly based on the medical model, as are all dominant forms of Government thinking. This being the case, and given Foucault's notion of governance, it is not difficult to understand that the Government's reliance on the medical model has the effect of denying acceptance and responsibility for the negative social and environmental influences experienced by people with impairments. This denial is then further assimilated and internalised into society as a whole. Chadwick (1996) tells it thus,

> *'the power of the individual model is safely ensconced in the conceptual foundations of the welfare state - it is a part of 'government'. And, as Foucault shows, government must be allowed a very broad meaning which encompasses the shaping, channelling and guiding the conduct of others'* (p.38).

A critical discussion of the medical and social models of disability show how both are incomplete with limited support by theorists and researchers. What then can later models offer?

2.3.3 The systems theory model of disability

The systems theory model of disability was derived from developmental psychology to account for the synergistic influence of the individual's characteristics and the environment over the course of time; a 'process-person-context' model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This model has two defining properties,

> *'assessment...not only of developmental outcomes, but also of the effectiveness of the processes producing these outcomes...both developmental outcomes and processes vary as a joint function of the characteristics of the person and of the environment, thus permitting the detection of synergistic effects'* (Bronfenbrenner, 1989:199-200).

The power of a process-person-context model lies in its interactional perspective, revealing the inadequacies of both the medical and social models of disability.

The incorporation of an element of process over time is considered to be vital as individuals are never static, rather continually developing over time, in one form or another. The model is therefore useful in practical terms when used within research designs that investigate developmental outcomes at two points in time (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000), for example, when investigating childhood disability from infancy to adolescence. It would appear pertinent, if not essential, to make use of this model in an educational context. The argument goes that the phrase 'special educational needs' potentially applies to any child who might experience or display disparate educational abilities and/or needs when compared with the majority (Sutton, 2003) and, of course, this may change considerably over any one developmental period due to a whole host of psychological or social factors. Through an understanding that nearly all children may experience SEN at some point in their academic career, then the potential abilities and future development of children need to be considered when designing assessments and supplying additional resources.

Akin to the systems theory model of disability is dynamic systems theory within the field of health research. Dynamic systems theory presents an explicit illustration of the complex interactions of the temporal and spatial individual. Dynamic systems theory is one approach to understanding motor development in which motor behaviour arises from the interaction of multiple subsystems (Hart, 1998). Practitioners (physio- and occupational

therapists) have considered this framework a viable alternative from which to develop treatment strategies for children with a diagnosis of cerebral palsy (CP) (Darrah and Bartlett, 1995). These authors examined three tenets of dynamic systems theory.

First, behaviour is the end product of a process of self-organisation within a system, including the central nervous system for example, so interventions must be performed in a functional context rather than a series of isolated exercises. Second, as sub-systems of developing systems change, motor behaviours may become more stable or they may destabilise, such destabilisation periods being referred to as transition states. It is assumed that new forms of movement will appear during transition states, therefore these are the optimal times in which to effect positive movement changes via intervention strategies. Third, components that prevent success at a functional task are viewed as rate-limiting, as they prevent developmental transformation. Therefore any factor that limits developmental transformation can be identified and therapeutically manipulated to effect positive change Darrah and Bartlett (1995).

2.3.4 The transactional model of disability

The transactional model of disability was also derived from developmental psychology, and views individuals as active participants in information exchange between them and the environment. Important here is the mutually reinforcing behaviours between, for example, a caregiver and the infant, with the behaviour of one person directly (but covertly) affecting the behaviour of the other, and vice versa. If such behaviours are negative, this would decrease the time spent with each other and possibly lead to developmental delay for the infant. Therefore, the perceptions of significant others with whom a disabled child comes into contact can potentially have an enormous impact upon that child's development, as demonstrated in much research (Harter, 1986; Sameroff, 1991; Llewellyn, 1999; Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000).

This model of disability appears to be relevant when considered alongside children with motor disorders, as the negative downward spiral of communication patterns between the young child and caregiver demonstrate the transactional nature of development (McGee and Sutton, 1989). Thus, from the point of view of the transactional model of disability, other individuals in the immediate vicinity and surroundings of the child may potentially positively influence the child to make developmental headway. Since the child is viewed as

an active participant in the process of information exchange, caregivers should give the child every opportunity in which to partake in communication exchanges.

2.3.5 New models of disability

It has recently become apparent that models of disability are only one way of viewing children with disabilities and some authors claim that a more useful approach would be to consider quality of life models. For example, in a review of quality of life models, Zekovic and Renwick (2003) argue that it is important that policy-makers should focus more on quality of life rather than on disability. This would enable the progressive development of non-discriminatory policies for the benefit of all children with and without disabilities.

Importantly, it has been proposed that the perspectives of parents of children with disabilities have been largely ignored within models of disability: some parents experience an unequal relationship with professionals, lacking an ability to actively participate in interventions or negotiate services on offer (Dale, 1996; Case, 2000). This was a point echoed by Brett (2002) who conducted a qualitative study of the experiences of parents whose children have profound impairments. The study concluded that the concerns of parents must serve as an informative and essential aid in the construction and development of an alternative model of disability: an 'alliance' model. This model proposes that parents' experiences are of paramount importance to aid in a complete understanding of disability.

2.4 Summary

The four models of disability have been critically discussed with regard to their utility in disability research, with the argument that models are socially and politically constructed to serve dominant ideological forces, the point to be drawn is that care should be exercised in their use. The second area of concern to be identified in terms of language use was that of SEN and what this implies in the field of childhood disability. It is to this issue that the thesis now turns.

2.5 Special educational needs (SEN)

Appropriately defining special educational needs (SEN) is problematic. Children have SEN if, as defined by the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (COP), they '...have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them' (DES, 2001:1:3). This is a loose definition (Florian, 2002) and one which takes an

objectivist perspective but it has been argued by those in the social constructionist movement that criteria for defining SEN has been historically and culturally determined. SEN is also dependent upon how and what dominant authorities expect children to achieve, how they expect them to behave and to what extent the child is seen to vary from the norm (Galloway, Armstrong and Tomlinson, 1994). In effect, SEN is viewed as a socially and politically constructed phenomenon.

From a social constructionist viewpoint, the phrase 'special educational needs' may be deconstructed to form a different definition from that of the COP (DES, 2001). For example, 'special' may refer to a child's normal response to abnormal conditions, as opposed to the accepted meaning, that of a child's abnormal response to normal conditions. 'Educational' perhaps refers more the social climate of the playground than the curriculum on offer. 'Needs' may refer equally to either the child or those surrounding the child. For example, does 'need' reflect the needs of the child with a learning or behavioural problem, or does it reflect the teacher who is more concerned with possible detrimental effects on other children or their own level of stress (Ford et al, 1982)?

Thomas and Loxley (2001) state that a Foucauldian analysis helps in an understanding that social structures such as special schools, assessment and teaching are constructed by intentional actions. For example, those intentional actions might be those derived from the social sciences in their attempts to define normality. Intentional actions might also be derived from the top of a hierarchical power structure such as central Government, passed down to local Government (the LEA) to be acted upon, and from there passed to individuals enmeshed within the system (parents who have children who are in need of their services). Once established as a way of being and of understanding, these social structures simultaneously create spaces for deviation from this norm (as in enacting choice). Such deviation is then subjected to surveillance, investigation and treatment.

Mehan (2001) was interested in how lexical labels such as 'learning disabled' become social facts, constructed from the ambiguities of everyday life and from educators' social interactions. Discursive data for this research consisted of observations, interviews, document analysis and videotaped events, presenting strong evidence in support of the author's claims of how a discursive history of educational categories aids a full understanding of these constructions, yet they must also be viewed through understanding

the practical application of these concepts from within dialogue. A good case is argued through the use of multiple data sources and different perspectives (working on a genealogical as well as an indexical plane) to show the interplay between the social production of classifications and their enactment across and between macro and micro levels.

Within the discourse of SEN, Macready (1991) poses a dialectical opposition of 'needs' and 'wishes' models. Within the 'needs' model, the knowledge of a range of professionals is called upon in order to identify a deficiency within the child, thereby identifying a 'need' which is to be addressed. This model implies that there is increased pressure on resources to provide for individual need at the expense of the 'needs' of the majority; certainly issues of equity may be raised. Clearly then, there is a link here to the medical model of disability discussed earlier.

Conversely, Macready (1991) states that where a 'wishes' model of SEN is utilised, there is a greater emphasis on the wishes of teachers and parents as opposed to the needs of the child. This model implies a child's invisibility, a bias towards the articulate and politically aware adult, and that vested interests and pressure groups play a large part in decisions regarding educational provision.

For a child to be viewed as having SEN, instead of solving the child's problem, such categorisation may become a problem in itself, insofar as special education frequently confirms differences among children in a way that pathologises them and sets them apart from the norm, in much the same way as does the medical model (Macready, 1991; Billington, 1996; 2002). This is evidenced in the British special school system, in which many children with statements of SEN are enrolled and thus kept apart from their mainstream peers.

In support of a social constructionist view of SEN, Helldin (2000) analysed the special education system in Sweden with Foucauldian methods, the author arguing that power, regulations and control mechanisms that exist between society's normal and marginalised groups have been socially constructed within the school system in Sweden.

Other authors critically discuss the problems encountered when defining terms such as SEN, arguing that a crucial part of research into SEN should be that of defining what it actually is, although, from a social constructionist perspective, meaning is never fixed and the possibility of 'defining' SEN is problematic in itself because of this. In other words, the concept of SEN changes from one moment in time to the next and from one culture to another. For example, Wilson (2002a) distinguishes between the linguistic meaning of the phrase and the criteria of its application and explores both, arguing that since policy, research and practice in special needs education are decided by conceptions of the phrase, those working in the area need to be aware of value judgements about what is important or beneficial in life. For children who have a motor disorder what is paramount, developing appropriate movement and social skills or academic achievement?

Wilson's (2002a) arguments run parallel to Macready's (1991) in distinguishing between needs and wishes (or rather, what is necessary and what is desirable), but takes the argument one step further to suggest that SEN is a matter of socially or culturally constructed determinants. To clarify this point, Wilson (2002a) posits that in a Western society, the ability to be literate and numerate is a necessity, as would be the ability to catch fish for an individual living in a society that depends on such abilities for its survival. But more importantly, Wilson (2002a) suggests that it may be even more necessary than learning literacy and numeracy that some children learn,

> *'...to behave justly, or to form rewarding personal relationships, or find meaning in his life, or invest in various worthwhile activities for their own sake'* (p.65).

This might appear more relevant for some children whose expected adult abilities might fall short of the normal expected range, as in the case of children with motor disorders and those who have mental health problems or physical difficulties. In such instances, the search for quality of life may be more acute than a search for the right curriculum.

But not everything taught in schools could be viewed as a necessity, and to a great extent, the term SEN calls for value judgements,

> *'...whether someone has a special need is not a matter of empirical fact: it calls rather for a judgement of value'* (Wilson, 2002a:64).

This suggests that value judgements inherent within the field of SEN are a social or cultural construction and the whole administration of SEN should therefore be treated as such by those who work in that area. It is clear to see that SEN is fraught with problematic issues at the definitive level and that, as policy in the field is continually changing, there appears to be an ever-pressing need to reflect upon how children are viewed in the light of this continual change. It is further clear to see that language problematises the issue. Moreover, the phrase 'children *with* SEN' increasingly locates the problem within the child, since the emphasis is on the word *with*.

Further, Galloway et al (1994) state how the special needs pupil is an essentially pathologising individualistic discourse. It might be suggested that once a general understanding and consensus of the term SEN is reached, then the focus might switch to the notion of a child *currently experiencing* SEN rather than *with* or *having* SEN. The point of focus would thus locate the problem as processual and societal issues, in that the difficulties do not permanently reside within the child but perhaps exist temporarily as a function of the environment, taking a more interactionist and temporal perspective.

Recently, Sutton (2003:21) argued that special educational needs is no more than,

> *'a pseudo-category telling nothing specifically about any one child falling under its rubric, other than that this particular child will be henceforth subject to certain legal and administrative procedures',*

and that the system itself, not the category, is the problem.

Serious questions hang over the whole area of SEN. Such questions might be that since value judgements are involved, then who is best placed to decide which children to include under that rubric? Where are these people to be found? In other words, should parents and teachers who have close and persistent contact with children make such decisions, or should they be left to those individuals best placed to govern society in general, such as a central authority - the LEA, perhaps (Wilson, 2002b)?

2.6 Critical reflection

The principal role that theory has played in my work has been to make me aware of the limitations of theory – of omissions, paradoxes and disparities within. Having a

longstanding interest in how language is used to shape our understanding of the world, I considered my most fundamental understanding of everyday life, including theoretical models, was that everything exists within the realm of discourse and that, as such, many phenomena that people take for granted and 'as given' are, in a sense, social and cultural constructs. I would therefore suggest that, although there may indeed be several competing theoretical models of disability, none may satisfactorily account for the multiple ways in which people with disabilities experience and speak of their circumstances or, indeed, the ways in which other people speak of them.

There is a lot that may be written (and has been written) about the advantages and limitations of each model of disability, the key features of each being their usefulness in terms of academic research and scholarship as well as in disability theory and research. However, it will come to be seen that, by the almost cavalier ways in which language is used to construct people with disabilities (and also their worlds and experiences) both the medical and social models prevail to this day (see Chapter 8).

In this thesis it is not my intention to pronounce on the truth or falsity of particular models of disability, rather to see them as socially constructed rhetorical devices by which to account for certain people and/or events within a given context. Therefore theorists, parents and administrators may be advantaged by having a number of theories of disability from which to choose, dependent upon, once more, the context of their sense-making activity. Notwithstanding, such models should be used with caution. As stated above, I am acutely aware of the limitations of theory, and each model of disability has its own limitations. In particular, not least what they address but also what they leave unaddressed. Gaps and silences can be understood as a valuable way of examining how theories construct the world they purport to explain (Gervais, 1999) – omissions within a given theory therefore point the way to their limitations.

There appears therefore to be a relationship between models of disability and concepts of SEN in that they may both now be viewed as socially constructed phenomena, created through language to serve one or other ideological force within society.

It is important to note that many qualitative researchers (myself included) are not usually drawn to theory, as they prefer instead to gather data and be guided by that in telling their

'story' or presenting their findings (Wolcott, 2002). In other words, the beauty of qualitative research lies primarily within the researcher's struggle, frustration, and non-commitment, just prior to a sense of 'Eureka!' when the researcher finally constructs the salient phenomenon. Theory is brought to bear in the latter stages of research in an attempt to underpin and justify findings.

CHAPTER 3
STATUTORY PROCESSES FOR CHILDREN WITH SEN

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three will set the research firmly into context by exploring the statutory statementing process for children identified as having SEN, by drawing on policies and Government guidelines. Moreover, problems inherent within the statementing process will be highlighted, which call into question the very process itself, such problems being implicated in lack of choice for parents. Also addressed in this chapter will be the recently emerging discourse of a market force approach to education, which will be critically discussed with reference to parental choice in the market place, as educational choice is of primary importance to this research. The notion of equity in both rhetoric and practice, and how this impacts on parental choice, will also be addressed.

3.2 The statutory process

The Warnock Report (DfES, 1978) and the Education Act of 1981 reinforced the centrality of the LEA in providing for children who are considered to have SEN. Thus the LEA became responsible for the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of statements and to provide the resources deemed necessary to meet the child's needs.

Statements of SEN are legally binding documents issued at the end of the statutory assessment process, which specify the additional educational resources considered to be required to meet the child's needs. They are conducted under the direction of LEAs (DES, 2001). Parents, schools and other agencies connected with the child may make a request for statutory assessment (DES, 2001:4.34), and provide the LEA with multi-disciplinary information in support of their request (DES, 2001:7.13). It is at this point that the LEA will seek to amass evidence that an assessment is needed. The Code of Practice (COP) (DES, 2001) makes it clear that the new school-based stages should effectively meet the child's needs in mainstream school (DES, 2001:7). However, if it is the LEA's decision that an assessment of SEN should go ahead, then they will require written reports

concerning the child in terms of parental, educational, medical, psychological and social services advice. In addition to this, the ascertainable wishes of the child might also be sought (DES, 2001:7.82).

There are four parts to the statement, part four being the school named as the one most likely to meet the child's needs. The COP (DES, 2001) states that parents may express a preference as to which maintained school they wish their child to attend (DES, 2001:8.57) and make representations for a placement in any other school (DES, 2001:8.60). But the LEA is under no obligation to meet parents' requests, and the ultimate decision of which school is more appropriate to meet the child's needs remains with the LEA. For example, LEAs must comply with parental preference unless,

> *'... the school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or the placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child would be educated, or with the efficient use of resources'* (Education Act 1996: Schedule 27).

This part of the statement is the one that causes many problems for both parties. For example, parents may wish their child to attend an independent special school, yet education administrators will be reluctant to allow such a placement, and often cite this section of the COP (DES, 2001) as reasons for their refusal (Owens, 2000; Hansard, 2002).

Since the Education Act of 1981, parents of children with SEN who do not have a statement have had exactly the same legal rights as other parents. This means that they have been able to express a preference for the school they wish their child to be educated in (Bagley, Woods and Woods, 2001). On the contrary, parents of statemented children do not appear to have held such rights. The LEA can name a school on a statement, but after having only 'taken account of' parental preferences; their preference does not have to be accepted. Therefore, LEAs retained control of decision-making over school selection (Riddell, Brown and Duffield, 1991). Moreover, the Education Act of 1981 deemed that, in naming a school, LEAs should, whenever possible, choose from the mainstream, in order to uphold Warnock's principle of inclusion (DfES, 1978).

Now, however, the COP (DES, 2001), under the Education Act of 1993 (and 1996), has attempted to bring the rights of children with statements in line with the rights of children

without a statement of SEN (Bagley et al, 2001). LEAs must now inform parents of pupils identified as having SEN of the different types of mainstream and special schools in their area in order for them to express a preference and identify their chosen school. Yet those preferences remain subject to professional verification as they are subject to many provisos. For example, CE as practised at NICE is not included in this scenario as it falls outside state authority and control, and although some parents may state their preference for this particular school, more often than not it is refused.

The current process of statutory assessment and statementing is now being called into question, with many commentators declaring the system to be failing in many areas. Some even go so far as to state that the system is in chaos (Hansard, 2002). For example, the legal protection of the statement is often seen to be unsubstantiated, in that there is sometimes little or no difference between provision received prior to and following its issue. In other words, the legal protection it infers is assumed and rhetorical (Williams and Maloney, 1998).

Several studies have indicated that parents experience considerable dissatisfaction with the ways in which professionals relate to parents, particularly in terms of what has been described as a jargonistic manner (Davis, 1993; Holland, 1996). Many LEAs are now working towards addressing these problems. For example, Holland (1996) argues that it is also the parents of children with physical disabilities that have special needs, one of which is that parents sometimes cannot understand the processes they are going through. Holland (1996) makes several suggestions, one of which is that educational psychologists, in particular, should make sure they communicate with parents in a non-jargonistic language they can understand. Although this is with respect to relationships between educational psychologists and parents, it is argued that this advice may be generalised to all officers working in LEAs that have cause to be in contact with parents.

Gross (1996) provides evidence that middle-class, articulate parents of children with identifiable need are favoured by some forms of statutory procedures, concluding that resource allocation based on individual assessment should be re-shaped or that individual advocacy should be raised to an equally accessible level for all. There is evidence to suggest that this bias towards articulate and politically aware parents inevitably leads to the

diversion of resources away from other needy children (Macready, 1991; Riddell et al, 1991; Gross, 1996).

Statutory assessment is also considered a lengthy, time-consuming activity (Wagner, 2000; Florian, 2002). Some commentators have posited practical solutions to the problems inherent in statementing, in that expenditure should be redistributed towards the less formal stages of the assessment process, those being the school-based stages as stated in the COP (DES, 2001), thus leading to less bureaucratic, lengthy and costly statement production (Coopers and Lybrand, 1996; Williams and Maloney, 1998).

Although issues of SEN are raised in the House of Commons frequently (Hansard, 2002), the problems and failings of the current statutory process may be best summarised through reference to the Audit Commission's report (2002). The report unequivocally states that statutory assessments and statements of SEN are in need of a major independent review, due to concerns about how well the statutory framework currently helps to meet children's needs. It argues the process is costly and bureaucratic, stressful and alienating for parents, statements provide little reassurance due to weak monitoring arrangements and shortfalls in some services, and statements lead to inequitable distribution of resources.

Pinney (2002), in summarising the Audit Commission's report (2002), reveals problems in assessment and statementing in the following areas: current approaches to assessment; statement developing; allocation of resources; and inefficient monitoring procedures by both LEAs and schools alike. The report also reveals that many parents of children with SEN feel that their choices are limited with regard to school admission because of a lack of suitable local provision - there is evidence of wide variability in provision across schools and across LEAs. Noticeable in its recommendations is increased delegation of resources to schools, supporting the recommendations of Coopers and Lybrand (1996) and Williams and Maloney (1998).

In order to understand how such a negative appraisal of SEN has come about, it is important to take a panoramic view of education in the United Kingdom. Economic, social and political pressures have seen education move into the realm of markets, providing the consumer with more autonomy and choice.

3.3 A market force approach to education

The changing landscape of education in the United Kingdom has seen a discourse of commerce built up around and within the traditional public-sector services as part of a wider project of privatisation initiated by Conservative Governments in the 1980s and 1990s (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Governmental reforms also sought to introduce market relations into educational services at all levels through the introduction of grant-maintained schools and the provision of assisted places to widen access to independent schools (Bridges and Husbands, 1996a; 1996b), following the Education Reform Act of 1988 (DfE, 1988). The Education Reform Act has increased governmental drive towards a market force approach to education, and in so doing, has attempted to disarm the provider (LEAs), to end their monopoly on education provision (Housden, 1993; Bines, 1995).

The field of education and special education has therefore now come to be viewed as a market place, with parents and children as consumers within this market (Bridges and McLaughlin, 1994; Bines, 1995; Radnor and Ball, 1996; Skidmore and Copeland, 1998; Thomas and Loxley, 2001). Education has been reduced to a commodity, with schools being redesigned and reconstructed to have impact on the market place. This naturally has its advantages and disadvantages.

Some have lauded the turn to a market force approach to education, principally on the grounds that it has created wider choice. Also because it has provided incentives by which improvements may be made towards a more efficient delivery of education, as well as innovation, in educational practices (Levin, 2002). Accordingly, schools will aim to achieve the highest possible standards (DES, 1991:14).

The main argument in favour of a market force approach to education is that a system which supports choice and diversity is more equitable than a system that is bureaucratically planned and controlled (Gewirtz, Ball and Rowe, 1995). Additionally, the curbing of bureaucratic and professional power in decision-making by LEAs should now advantage the consumer (Bines, 1995).

However, the concept of an educational market place has been criticised. It has either run ahead of or lagged behind the reality on the ground (Wilkins, 2000), but, more importantly, the rules of the market are dictated through the wishes of its political masters (Housden,

1993). In addition, Bines (1995) argues that the development of market forces in education runs contrary to the assertion that the current system of education meets individual needs in an equitable manner.

These arguments have been supported by recent postmodern analyses. Case, Case and Catling (2000) critically examined the effects of OFSTED inspections on primary teachers' working practices, arguing that disciplinary regimes and normalising judgement may be used to frame teachers' descriptions of themselves. The authors conclude that the inspection itself is little more than an apparatus created and maintained to satisfy the scrutinising gaze of the wider public. These phenomena of power, regulation, technologies of surveillance and control mechanisms are not, however, confined to primary and secondary schooling. Rather, such power and regulation may also be seen in the systems of Higher Education. Broadhead and Howard (1998) used a Foucauldian analysis to explore the Research Assessment Exercise in Higher Education in terms of the enactment of disciplinary power. This study concluded that academic staff's critical response to the exercise had failed to challenge it in any basic manner, illustrating the extent to which disciplinary power is lodged firmly within Higher Education.

Using Foucault's conception of the panopticon (see Section 10.4), Moffatt (1999) analysed the social welfare system, arguing that disciplinary power is not restricted to the social assistance office, the office is just another site of its enactment, and that other sites may also be open to scrutiny in terms of disciplinary power. Studies by both Moffatt (1999) and Ryan (1991) were concerned with Foucault's conceptualisation of the panopticon.

Also, as a result of market forces in education, some schools have seen that gaining their fair share of available resources and funding is a crucial area of concern, and therefore make more demands in their own interests. This has inevitably led to a rapid increase in the number of statements issued. Such an increase results in less practical support for children in schools and a heavy increase in statutory administration procedures for LEAs. Subsequently, increased bureaucracy, diversion of support services and the high cost of statementing ultimately led to a reduction in actually meeting children's needs (Williams and Maloney, 1998).

Importantly, recent researchers have found that the demands of consumers have not been met in terms of supply. For example, Paige-Smith (1996) interviewed parents regarding statementing, integration and choice, and found that educational policy on parental choice sometimes does not match the expectations of parents whose children experience difficulties or who have disabilities.

As the new discourse of 'choice', specialisation and diversity within the market becomes more prominent, there is evidence to suggest that, rather than benefiting the disadvantaged, it is further disadvantaging those least able to compete in the market (Gewirtz et al, 1995). A culture of choice has been instigated, perpetuating the formation of parental pressure groups to campaign for the rights of children, particularly those parents of children who experience SEN at some point in their educational careers. But those parents who are not so vocal are invisible and do not enjoy the benefits secured by others.

Riddell et al (1991) found that parents of children with specific learning difficulties have had some success in arguing for improved levels of resourcing, but other groups of parents whose children have other specialist needs and have had no powerful advocacy group to argue their case have not enjoyed the same success.

3.3.1 Parental choice in the education market

One effect of the market means that consumers operate in terms of self-interest. But school choice is hard to implement. Some parents are able to choose a school for their child that ensures the delivery of an education perceived by them to be of maximum advantage to their child whilst others are not. Yet it has been argued that parental involvement in a child's education promotes the chances of their child's achievement (Plowden Report, 1967; Stillman, 1994). This then begs the question as to why, in the current climate of the promotion of parental choice in school placement, LEAs sometimes remain reluctant to listen to and take action on the requests of parents. There are mixed ideas as to whether choice for parents of children with SEN is a positive feature of recently developing market forces in education.

In the early 1990s, one positive reflection of parental choice came from Braithwaite (1992), who argued that maintained schools would increase in terms of quality because, when choosing schools, parents would consider the school's values and ethos, and their

child's needs. But if this is so for the maintained sector, what effect will market forces have for independent and non-maintained special schools? Braithwaite (1992) explains how parents can enrol their children either within the existing system or outside the existing system. For example, parents who believe their children have more specialist needs than most and who, after shopping around for an appropriate school, find the public sector wanting in such specialist provision, find themselves looking for a placement outside the public sector. But to enrol a child outside local control would incur great expense to the family and is therefore not usually an alternative to those families on low income.

More often than not, LEAs usually refuse to support preferences outside the maintained sector (Owens, 2000). The problem in the United Kingdom is that non-maintained and independent schools are not (or are minimally) subsidised by the state and therefore remain the province of only well-to-do families. By way of contrast, other countries such as the Netherlands have independent schools which are fully state subsidised and parents are able to choose any school for their child (MacBeth, 1993).

Positive aspects concerning parental choice have been expressed by some (Halstead, 1994). However, Halstead (1994) adds the caveat that society as a whole does not benefit from individual choice, and provides two perspectives to argue the point. First, a 'social-justice' perspective, in that individual choice is in conflict with the interests of society and, from this perspective, parental choice would increase inequalities, with the middle classes obtaining unfair advantages. Second, an 'efficiency and practicability' viewpoint, in which poorer schools will attract less pupils and therefore reduced funding, while schools with a good record may be over-subscribed, leading to the creation of strict selection criteria. Again, parental choice would become limited.

Knill and Humphreys (1996) conducted a small-scale study of the perspectives of parents regarding their child's education, involving both mainstream and special school placements. The authors state that one benefit of a market force approach to education is that parents are made more aware of their rights and have increased influential power. However, their study revealed many discrepancies within this view, not least of which was that some parents of children in special schools, primarily due to their own limited

educational experiences, were usually unable to adequately express their own understanding of their child's educational experiences.

Interestingly, Beresford (1995) surveyed 1152 parents of children with disabilities and found that, strikingly, 50% of parents reported that administrators do not understand what it is like to look after a child with CP. The implication here is that education administrators have no understanding of the best provision to allocate as they have no knowledge of the developmental and academic implications arising from a motor disorder. There is a certain irony in that administrators have the final say in resource allocation and make provision for children based upon little or no understanding of the specific needs they are providing for.

In addition to this, it has been argued that the contemporary emphasis on consumer ideology in education has bolstered social class divisions, as parents from low-income backgrounds are less able to exercise choice in the education market place (Vincent and Tomlinson, 1997; Sykes, 2001). From this perspective, it is clear to see that parents from higher income families would therefore exercise more choice when considering education, and thus social class divisions are perpetuated.

The power of the Government to make a success out of school reforms may be evidenced in the new discourse of 'choice', encompassing the notions of rights, duties, responsibilities and choice (Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball, 1994), strengthened within The Parent's Charter (DES, 1991). From a critical social constructionist perspective, the discourse of 'choice' has been constructed by the Government primarily in order to achieve its own ends, that of the promotion and continuation of the market as a cost-cutting exercise and also to maintain its regulatory practices. Parents have no alternative but to opt into the practices of this discourse, effectively being captured by the discourse (Bowe et al, 1994), some not even having set out to choose a school.

Although there has been much research into parental choice, a great deal has been criticised for various shortcomings, mainly on matters of methodology, analysis and representation. Hunter (1991), for example, asked parents to indicate spontaneous reasons for their choice and to indicate the relative importance of 26 suggested factors, but this inherently limits the ways in which people may respond, and is therefore methodologically flawed.

Stillman (1994) provides a historical overview of the development of educational choice in the United Kingdom, identifying conflicts and tensions, and showing how these are inescapable. The author argues that, although there has been some considerable controversy between political parties, educational vouchers might represent the most complete response to the 'choice' debate in schooling, on the grounds that parental rights are a major issue in matters of choice. Levin (2002) agrees, asserting that,

> *'parents have the right to rear their children in the manner that they see fit, philosophically, religiously, politically and in lifestyle. Since education is a central component of child-rearing, this right is consistent with freedom of educational choice. That is, it suggests that parents should be able to choose the type of school that best matches their child-rearing preferences'* (p.160-161).

It could therefore be argued that a system of educational vouchers might serve to grant more parents of children with SEN greater freedom of choice in their child's education. For example, they could choose a school compatible with their own intrinsic child-rearing wishes and practices, having the opportunity to opt for schools both within and outside state control.

It must be noted that freedom of choice may be incompatible with notions of equity. Levin (2002) points out that an education system that prepares children for adult citizenship requires a substantial educational experience for all children. The United Kingdom, however, since the national curriculum was introduced, could now claim to offer equality of academic experience. But this is not so when mainstream curricula differ radically from special school curricula.

3.4 Equity

Recent legislation delivers much rhetoric about choice and empowerment for parents (DES, 2001; DfES, 2001), yet many parents of children with SEN have no ultimate choice as they have to rely on (the coercion of) others to make decisions on school or resource allocation for them (Lee, 1996). In education, these decision-makers attempt to do so in a manner directed towards achieving equity of resource allocation (either implicitly or explicitly) (COP, 2001). Yet because equity means to treat everyone as far as possible

equally, the definition is a general one, and how it is applied to and received in real situations is questionable (Lee, 1996).

Lee (1996) points to a variety of definitions of the term equity, illustrating how difficult it is to operationalise the concept in practice. To simplify the meaning as understood in this thesis, the conceptualisation of equity is taken to be that defined by the Collins Concise Dictionary (Collins, 2001:488),

> *'the quality of being impartial; fairness'.*

Many authors argue that a future education system should be guided by all in the field by ideals of equity, social justice and opportunity for all (Rowles, Riley and Docking, 2000; Thomas and Loxley; 2001). Such ideals, Thomas and Loxley (2001) argue, should encompass an acceptance of insights derived from our own knowledge of learning, failure and success.

Ideals of equity, then, purport to advance an education system in which all children, collectively, are granted the same opportunities, without recourse to either positive or negative discrimination (Lee, 1996). Equity and choice in a market place (see Section 3.3.1) become problematic, however, when children whose physical difficulties, and therefore educational, social and developmental needs, are considered by some to be far greater than others. The problem inherent in policies that advocate equity of educational provision is that there is a fundamental denial of individual differences. From a critical perspective, the individual needs of children (and subsequently the requests of their parents) would appear to be invisible; blanketed and obscured by a system that purports to give more choice, freedom and empowerment to service-users, yet serves only to search for equity (perhaps according to need via formula funding for schools) (Lee, 1996). However, the notion of equity should not be taken for granted and may also be seen as a socially and politically constructed ideal.

One example in which equity may be seen as problematic comes from Benbow and Stanley (1996), who highlight the plight of gifted American pupils, showing how their intellectual potential has declined due to an educational system that pits equity with excellence and therefore fails on both counts. The same may be said of children with SEN in the United

Kingdom, as the push towards mainstream inclusion and equitable practices fails to take into account the huge diversity of individual differences and need. Benbow and Stanley (1996) conclude that,

> *'a one-size-fits-all mentality does not work; we need to be responsive to individual differences'* (p.278-279).

Ryan (1991) used Foucault's notions of disciplinary technology and panopticism (a system in which individuals are constantly observed – see Section 10.4) to illustrate the production of inequalities in schooling, concluding that schools are systems of managing individuals by constant, perpetual observation, not dissimilar to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* (Orwell, 1965). Such observation and examination supply knowledge that aids in the construction and supervision of culturally valued norms. Although Ryan (1991) provides a good account that aids in a critical understanding of schools and the production of inequalities within them, there is no attempt to apply this new understanding in ways which might help in the reduction of inequalities, as would much research in which Foucauldian principles are brought to bear and which lay open a critical space to pursue positive change for the better.

Critically, equity could also be regarded as the widest possible distribution of a basic minimum standard of education. It has been shown how equity in education may be an idealistic concept and difficult to implement. The fundamental criticism of so-called equitable practices is that they deny the individual's needs and therefore could be viewed as discriminatory practices.

To conclude this chapter, Almond (1994) states that,

> *'it would be generally true to say that most parents are not prepared to sacrifice their own children's welfare for the public good'* (p.70),

primarily arguing against the consensus of governmental principles and practice of uniformly applying a common education and equity for all. In other words, most parents would pit their child's needs over and above the needs of other children and endeavour to enact choice in their child's education.

3.5 Critical reflection

This chapter has highlighted the problematic nature of the current statementing system within a market force approach to education and how ideals of equity are simply that – socially and politically constructed ideals.

In Chapter one (Section 1.4), I stated that I often questioned the concept of choice on a personal level. Having experienced almost a decade of my adult life in which I had been denied choice in nearly every aspect of my life and, coupled with being positioned as powerless, I now strongly value individual choice and freedom to pursue a life path of my own choosing. This contemporary notion and rhetoric of individual choice, pervasive in the Western world, appears to sit oddly with the sometimes equally pervasive sense of disempowerment and the sense that choices are limited in a practical way. The notion of choice itself may be viewed as a mechanism of government, in other words, nothing more than a part of the apparatus of governmental control and discipline.

I would argue that although compulsory education is promoted as providing individual opportunity, governmental concern is charged more with creating a docile, uniform workforce as a means of disciplining and controlling a large mass of people. I viewed choice as a phenomenon intrinsic to who we are as subjective human beings. However, choice resides within power relationships and in the act of choosing we inherently choose from a selection of options, those options involving other people, within various contexts, from socially and historically created bases and ultimately our choices have effects on others. Whether a choice made in one particular context at one particular time is right or wrong is dependent upon a number of factors but might not come to the fore perhaps for some time. Yet such situational and temporal features of 'choice' are still bounded by the larger, more pervasive effects of power at a higher level.

My decision (rather my daughter's decision) to attend the school of her choosing ultimately proved to have been the right choice, following exceptional grades at age sixteen. We knew, at the time of choosing that school, that the school's ethos and my daughter's abilities and aspirations were compatible and we were proved right.

But what of parents whose children have a disability or learning difficulty who, like we did, instinctively know that a certain school is right for their child but are refused their placement option? As a parent, I cannot imagine their hopes for their child's future being dashed by a bureaucracy which claims to value choice, equity and excellence for all. It appears that the discourse of 'choice' at a personal level coexists and conflicts with that at a policy level.

CHAPTER 4
MOTOR DISORDERS

4.1 Introduction

The focus of Chapter four will be specifically concerned with childhood movement problems. The term 'motor disorders' will be explained, moving from descriptions of the cerebral palsies, their diagnostic problems and developmental implications to a critical discussion of the educational opportunities afforded to children with motor disorders. There is a striking contrast between mainstream education, the more conventional special school environment and CE, all of which will be drawn together to summarise the overall aim of CE – dynamic inclusion. It is from this chapter that an understanding of why parents may choose alternative schools for their child with a motor disorder comes to the fore.

4.2 Definition

Firstly, it is important to define the term motor disorder, as it is commonly used within the CE movement (Sutton, 1996; 1998). The term 'motor disorder' derived from Hungary as a means of differentiating neurologically based developmental motor problems from physical disability (Sutton, 1986a) and is a part of the cultural language of CE, although the term is now used by wider authors in disability and medical literature. Contrary to the WHO (1980) definitions of disability, in CE terminology, CP is described as a motor disorder or a motor dysfunction. These terms (disorder and dysfunction) have been justified in that they avoid a label of finality and irreversibility. Those within the CE movement acknowledge the dynamic process that often occurs for a child either spontaneously or through guidance, and recognise the positive environmental interaction that individuals may experience (Kozma and Balogh, 1995) (see Section 4.7.6).

Motor disorders are evidenced by problems of control and co-ordination of intentional goal-directed movements due to damage or disease of the central nervous system. People with motor disorders may have no physical abnormality - their bodies and limbs may have

developed normally - but it is their ability to control their bodies and limbs that is the principle disabling problem (Sutton, 1986a). There is a wide spectrum of motor disorders that can affect both the young and the elderly, the underlying causes of which can be many and varied. The primary effects, however, are similar; a certain lack of control and co-ordination over physical movements. It is those that affect the younger population that are of concern here.

Due to decreased motor ability, the individual experiences an inability (or reduced ability) to interact in a socially and historically defined and constructed world, as human movements are culturally learned. Drawing on developmental psychology, Vygotskii (1978) suggested that the internalisation of socially based and historically developed activities is responsible for the transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal process. For Vygotskii (1978) then, psychological development does not occur solely internally but through human relationships, human interaction and human communication - this Vygotskii (1978) referred to as internalisation. Important here is the connection between psychological development and movement development.

Problems of social interaction therefore affect the development of practical motor functions such as posture, locomotion, manipulation, continence and speech, normally developed as the infant learns within a social world (McGee and Sutton, 1989). Motor and social problems of learning cause a mutually reinforcing negative downward spiral by way of little or no development. Thus children with motor disorders have to overcome potentially life-long problems of development in the realms of cognitive, social and personal functioning as they find their development constrained due to practical difficulties in interacting with the social and material world.

4.3 The cerebral palsies

One such motor disorder is CP, a non-progressive abnormality of the brain including in its effects weakness and un-coordination of the limbs. There are three different types of CP and the term is therefore often referred to as 'the cerebral palsies'. Problems of sensory perception, including lack of balance, are always present to some degree, and posture and speech may be severely affected (Hall and Hill, 1996). The affected part of the brain is that which usually controls muscles and certain movements, and CP results in disordered

messages between the brain and the muscles. It is estimated that two to three children per thousand live births are born with CP (British Medical Association, 1990).

4.3.1 Types of cerebral palsy

There are three types of CP (Hall and Hill, 1996):

1. *Spastic* - the most common form of CP, in which the cerebral cortex is affected. In this form, muscles are stiff and joint movement is decreased.
2. *Athetoid* - a form of CP in which the basal ganglia is affected. Involuntary movements result from rapid muscular changes, from tense to relaxed. Difficulty in controlling the tongue, breathing and vocal cords results in hard to understand speech. Hearing may also be affected.
3. *Ataxic* - a relatively rare form of CP in which the cerebellum is impaired. Developmental effects include poor balance and poor spatial awareness, resulting in an unsteady gait.

In each form of the disorder, the body may be affected in any of the following ways:

a) *Hemiplegia* - one side of the body is affected.

b) *Diplegia* - legs are affected more than the arms.

c) *Quadriplegia* - legs and arms are both affected (Hall and Hill, 1996).

4.3.2 Diagnostic problems

Diagnostic difficulties arise due to the effects of CP varying from child to child in their occurrence and severity. Where there is uncertainty about the diagnosis, the term 'evolving motor disorder' may be used to demonstrate the extent of the child's abilities (Hemihelp, 1999). It is also possible for children to have a combination of types. Although CP is non-progressive, secondary developmental problems (both physiological and psychological) may arise as the child grows older, and difficulties may become more noticeable.

Problems in diagnosis can lead to problems in treatment or therapy. It is therefore vital for a child with motor difficulties to receive assessment as early as possible in order to provide appropriate intervention. The age from two to seven years is recognised as a time of acquisition of many different movement skills (Chambers and Sugden, 2002). When

considered alongside a child's education, it may be seen that problems of a motor nature may disadvantage the child in terms of functional, academic and social difficulties in the classroom setting.

Studies have found that the life expectancy of children with CP is no different from that of children without CP, at least for the first twenty years, and even children with more severe CP have a fifty per cent chance of living to age twenty (Hutton, Cooke and Pharoah, 1994) or longer. This has considerable implications for their social and educational development, particularly when considering their quality of life with an appropriate (for them) intervention.

Early intervention is vital if children with motor disorders are to make progress in the motor and social domains, as well as increase their self-concept and improve their academic progress (Harris, 1997). A study by Knight, Henderson, Losse and Jongmans (1992) compared a group of children with motor difficulties at age six and sixteen compared with a group of matched controls and found that the group of children with motor problems at age six continued to show problems in these areas at age sixteen. However, the authors point out that where provision for the young children with a motor disorder is concerned, although early intervention strategies are essential, there remain problems as to overall responsibility for this intervention. For example, are educational or health professionals best suited to take such responsibility? In addition, Sugden and Chambers (1998) show that no one therapeutic intervention is any more superior to another, and conclude that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that most approaches work.

4.3.3 Developmental implications

For a child with a motor disorder, problems of control and co-ordination of movement affect a child's developmental pathway in the following manner. In the normally developing infant, primitive reflexes are gradually replaced by postural reflexes which resemble later voluntary movements (Gallahue and Ozmun, 1989), and it is assumed that there is a link between reflexive behaviour and later voluntary movement. Assessment of primitive reflexes is included in the routine examination of infants under six months of age and it is noticeable that prolonged persistence of these reflexes is evidenced in severe CP (Hall and Hill, 1996). Thus, a child who has CP, and who does not lose these primitive

reflexes, does not therefore develop to the next stage of motor development, that of postural reflexes.

During infancy, eye contact between the caregiver and child supports the establishment of an emotional bond, an optimal interactive relationship (Gallahue and Ozmun, 1989). Akos and Akos (1991) refer to this as the 'intercerebral field', consisting almost exclusively of mutual co-operation. But when appropriate and consistent eye contact and facial cues fail to occur because of a child's inability to control such movements, a mutually reinforcing cycle of reduced expectations on the part of the caregiver and minimal social developmental progress on the part of the child occurs. The caregiver cannot teach the child correctly and the child, in return, cannot learn. Moreover, if uncorrected, problems occur in the whole developmental nexus. For instance, normal physical and psychological developmental milestones are restricted or delayed (McGee and Sutton, 1989; Akos and Akos, 1991).

Studies have found that prevalence rates of CP appear to vary between geographical areas (SCOPE, 2002), and it is important to examine the kinds of schooling available for children with CP as an appropriate education is crucial for their psychological, social and academic development.

In the United Kingdom, children with motor disorders such as CP are usually included within the category of SEN. This term has been critically discussed (see Section 2.5), but it is important to distinguish what is meant by SEN in this context as motor disorders are more complex than many learning difficulties under this rubric. The needs of children with motor disorders differ from child to child and the type of education, therapy, treatment and rehabilitation they receive may sometimes be contrary to the needs and wishes of both the children and their parents (Owens, 2000).

Children with motor disorders have quite specific problems, and there are meaningful differences both in the child's ability to learn and the effect of a program of intervention. However, general similarities have become apparent. Children with motor disorders **can** learn and **can** improve performance, as the characteristics of the disorder change over time irrespective of any intervention. Programs of structured intervention are more efficacious than random experience, and motivation and self-esteem are essential ingredients of any

intervention. Furthermore, learning is a total experience and is rarely successful when limited to small blocks of time and effort addressing only selected problem areas (Goldstein, 1995). There is therefore a pressing need for some children with motor disorders to have an intensive, either short- or long-lasting therapeutic intervention if they are to be allowed the chance of a more meaningful (for them), fully inclusive life. But what does the United Kingdom have to offer these children in terms of education?

4.4 Educational opportunities: special schools

Tracing the genealogy of segregated provision for children who deviated from the norm, Copeland (1997) shows how this was made possible through the Egerton Commission of 1889. This report contained a scientific basis for objectifying children with learning difficulties, legitimised dividing practices in schools and secured the dominance of the medical model in the field (see Section 2.3.1). Importantly, the report also laid the foundations for the location, specifically the segregation, of these children (RCBDD, 1889). Subsequently, segregated classes were established in Leicester schools, with London initiating the first completely segregated schools for special instruction.

For most of the latter half of the twentieth century, the accepted form of education in the United Kingdom for children with motor disorders was in a special school, an establishment in which children with various psychological, behavioural, emotional, physical and learning difficulties are enrolled. One positive feature about such schools is the specialisation of staff to teach children with SEN and also the low pupil teacher ratio which currently stands at 4:8 (DfES, 2002). Yet this segregation of certain groups of children was how they became constructed as 'different'.

Enrolment in a special school, however, is purely for the purpose of education, in addition to which a range of specialists are called upon as a bolt-on to education, in the form of therapy or treatment, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. Therefore special education in the United Kingdom for children with motor disorders can be considered a fragmented approach (Taylor and Emery, 1995). There are difficulties inherent in so many staff attempting to communicate their strategies to each other, that professionals from different sectors perform their work in isolation and the whole child is not adequately addressed (Jernqvist, 1986).

4.5 Educational opportunities: mainstream schools

More recently, a much advocated educational alternative for children with motor disorders is mainstream schooling whereby children are afforded the opportunity to receive their education in the local vicinity alongside their peers and friends. The present Labour Government has placed a duty on LEAs to raise standards in education and LEAs will therefore be judged on their ability to meet that goal (Lane, 1998), one component of which is the inclusion of students with SEN into mainstream classes.

Bines (2000) states that the Government is formally committed to inclusion and indeed, SEN is a central area of policy. There is now a highly political agenda in which parents of children with SEN are encouraged to opt for mainstream schooling and LEAs now have a duty to provide mainstream education for children with statements wherever possible (DfE, 1996; DfEE, 1998; DES, 2001; DfEE, 2001). Recent trends illustrate how the principles espoused by recent legislation are beginning to take effect in that, clearly, there has been a move towards mainstreaming.

To illustrate the move towards inclusion, there has been an increase in the percentage of newly statemented children being placed in mainstream schools (from 74.3% in 1999 to 76.3% in 2001). This corresponds with a decrease in children with new statements being placed in maintained and non-maintained special schools for these years (maintained: 6468 decreasing to 5729; non-maintained: 204 decreasing to 155) (DfES, 2002). However, inclusion remains a contested area and the statistics also show how mainstreaming is not suitable for all children with SEN.

Croll and Moses (1998) explain the slow and uneven development of inclusion by way of pragmatism and ideology: pragmatism to describe an aspect of LEA decision-making and ideology to describe an aspect of pressure for inclusion. The authors also stress the importance of considering values associated with parental rights and choice, when considering the education of a particular child with a disability or overall provision in general to be offered.

The statistics show a diversity of children transferring between mainstream and special schools in 2001 (DfES, 2002). Whilst only 1147 children transferred from independent or special to mainstream schools, 5251 children transferred out of mainstream to independent

or special schools (DfES, 2002). The very same trends have also been found in children with Down Syndrome transferring from mainstream school (Cunningham, Glenn, Lorenz, Cuckle and Shepperdson, 1998). This may be suggestive of a lack of adequate resources to cater for some children with statements in mainstream. Alternatively, as more parents are becoming aware of their rights, they perhaps seek a better educational environment that is more suited to their child's needs. Moreover, differences in local policies, geographical factors, variation in individual need and differences between schools may be the underlying causes. More research needs to be undertaken to further explore and explain the underlying reasons for such a large number of children transferring out of mainstream schools.

There are as many advantages as disadvantages for inclusion. Inclusion may enhance the social skills and community participation of children with disabilities (Jenkinson, 1997). Many studies have explored teachers' attitudes towards including children with SEN (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000a) and it has been found that teachers' attitudes to the principles of inclusion are generally positive (Lindsay, 1997), although the severity of physical need serves to reduce positive attitudes (Avramidis et al, 2000b; Croll and Moses, 2000). LEAs' attitudes are also generally positive (Ainscow, Farrell, Tweddle and Malki, 1999). Other authors suggest that improvements may be made to mainstream teachers' and other children's attitudes towards disability (Jenkinson, 1997). Furthermore, it has been documented that special school teachers have higher levels of efficacy, ability, understanding and resources (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick and Scheer, 1999) than do mainstream teachers.

Disadvantages are manifold, and most involve issues of physical access. For example, it has been noted that children with physical disabilities have access to the whole school in only 26% of primary and 10% of secondary schools (Coopers and Lybrand, 1993), and that schools must adapt their environments to take into account children with physical disabilities (Bishop, 2001). Some commentators advocate that inclusion is ideological and simply will not work in practice (DeBurgh-Thomas, 2002). Others see threats to inclusion in the form of lack of precise definitions of inclusion, lack of research evidence and persistent labelling of children akin to the medical model (Feiler and Gibson, 1999). It has also been argued that for a child with SEN to have a learning support assistant in mainstream class may be detrimental to the child's learning for many reasons (Booth,

Ainscow and Dyson, 1998; Ainscow, 2000). Moreover, there have been reports that children with SEN are frequently bullied in mainstream schools (Llewellyn, 1995).

Some authors argue that there is a tension between what dominant groups think is in the best interest of children with SEN (that is, inclusion) and the child (or parents) expressing a choice which may be antithetical to such a notion (Norwich, 2000). In other words, there are ethical limits to inclusion.

Some theorists and researchers now argue that research into inclusion has concentrated primarily on simplistic notions of the amount of inclusion taking place, and suggest instead that more work needs to be done to understand the quality of inclusion. Allan (1995; 1996) accordingly took a Foucauldian perspective to show how discourses of SEN construct children's experiences and identities as subjects and objects of knowledge.

4.6 Summary

To summarise, the cerebral palsies are subsumed under the broader category of motor disorders, and there are different kinds of CP which give rise to diagnostic difficulties. It has also been shown that associated developmental problems necessitate early intervention and therefore appropriate educational placement. A special school education is constructed by some as fragmented, and the child's problems are not viewed from a holistic perspective. Mainstreaming may offer some children an appropriate education, but there are problems in that it is not suitable for all. CE, however, offers an alternative philosophy and pedagogy, and it is to this that the chapter now turns.

4.7 Educational opportunities: conductive education (CE)

4.7.1 Overview

CE was introduced to the United Kingdom in 1987 (Read, 1992a; Bairstow and Cochrane, 1993), around the time of the Education Reform Act (1988) which brought radical changes to education and which highlighted parental choice in the educational arena. Therefore, since parents of children with motor disorders are able to exercise more choice, some opt for the best possible, in their view, education for their child, that of CE. The National Institute of Conductive Education in Birmingham (NICE) is the main centre of excellence in the delivery of CE in the United Kingdom, although there are now approximately forty centres that employ fully qualified conductors.

CE is an educational approach, developed by Andras Peto in Hungary, which understands motor disorders as problems of learning (Sutton, 1989) and incorporates a strong cognitive element. Conductive pedagogy requires the conscious, intrinsically motivated participation of the child but, more than this, it is the conductor's sole responsibility to lead the child in this process. Accordingly, Sutton (1989) suggested that it is a moral imperative that a conductor be socialised into the ideology of the conductor's own teaching difficulties as opposed to the child's learning difficulties.

It is clear to see that it is the responsibility of the conductor to create the conditions in which the child with a motor disorder is enabled to learn (Kozma, 1995; Read, 1998). The substantive aim of CE is to link cognitive, emotional, motoric and social elements of a child's development, this linkage being developed and sustained by the active, dedicated and close involvement of the conductor (Read, 1998). In an address given in the United Kingdom in 1968, Maria Hari stressed the importance of this integrated role of the conductor over other approaches,

> *'if we examine any other method or system we see that in almost every case even the members of the best co-operating team using uniform principles deal separately with each phase* [physical task series and teaching the curriculum], *one after the other, always keeping specific aims in mind, whereas in the conductive system the various particular principles are combined and take place simultaneously'* (Maguire and Sutton, in press).

Sutton (1996) constructs and locates CE within an educational model in that the practice aims to develop motor functions that have a social purpose, meaning and intention, as an integral part of the development of the whole person (McGee and Sutton, 1989). It has repeatedly been argued that CE is not a cure, neither does it aim to cure, motor disorders (Sutton, 1986a; 1986b; 1998; 1999a; 1999b; McGee and Sutton, 1989). Instead it enables people to function more independently, through psychosocial processes which help in the creation of intrinsic motivation to learn and interact socially. CE is aimed at the whole person, not the separate entities of the effects of CP. Neither are children treated in terms of their special needs (SCOPE, 2000).

4.7.2 Theory and philosophy

It is difficult to define theory and philosophy behind CE because, as in any system of practice, practitioners adopt a range of perspectives at any given time and over time, making generalisation problematic (Read, 1998). Suffice here to give an overview of the theory and philosophy underpinning CE as it is understood at present.

The philosophy of CE is constructed as an holistic educational approach to disability, wherein the whole person is immersed in an all-encompassing system of habilitation, special education and rehabilitation (Read, 1995). Sutton (1996) states that CE is built on a cognitive model which holds that mental structures are the products of pedagogic interactions (the result of interactive teaching and learning), rather than their determinants - human learning does not develop biologically, but through interaction and communication.

A thorough understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of CE has for a long time been elusive, principally because Peto developed only the practical elements of CE, the theoretical understanding being provided later. However, Kozma (1995) states that theoretical and practical confusion may still be found. Notwithstanding, the basic tenets of CE may be evidenced within the process itself. For example, group work, the striving to develop intrinsic motivation via goal-orientation on the part of the child, rhythmic intention (see page 50 – same Section) and complete solidarity between conductors working together, all combine to form an educational approach with the united aim of the child achieving independence in a range of daily activities.

The small conductive group is constructed as the principle social unit for conductive teaching and is composed of individuals chosen for their compatibility in educational, psychological, social and rehabilitational levels achieved (Sutton, 1986a). When the group is theorised in this way, as a natural medium for people in which each individual may make comparisons between themselves and others, it follows that the group dynamic will develop an energising, driving, encouraging force within which all of its members are situated (Szolnoki, 1994; Kozma, 1995). Every activity in the daily schedule occurs within the group, including eating, working, playing and even toileting. Importantly, the group provides social facilitation in the performance of its activities.

Kozma (1995) also argued that interest and intrinsic motivation increase the effectiveness of learning, and it is for this reason that meaningful day-to-day activities that have personal meaning for each child are deployed within the conductive process. In this way, active participation, emotional involvement and bodily awareness are encouraged and supported. Meaningful, day-to-day activities involve the setting of goals specifically tailored to meet the most individual of requirements (Akos and Akos, 1991). As one goal is reached and celebrated, so the next goal is set and so on, each goal being slightly past the child's present level of achievement.

This resonates with Vygotskii's notion of a zone of proximal development (Vygotskii, 1978). In this context, decisions regarding a child's education should be based not on what they are but upon what they may be brought to through optimal adult intervention (Sutton, 1986b).

Each group member helps in the promotion of the group's unity and organisation by being positioned as a conductor's assistant (Szolnoki, 1994), thereby developing a feeling of collective responsibility. In this way, the success of each individual member becomes a matter of collective concern.

Rhythmical intention is used as a form of facilitation in CE by which verbal intention prepares an action to be performed and, by linking speech and action, goal achievement becomes conscious and verbally determined (Szolnoki, 1994). These principles reflect Luriya's concept of verbal regulation in children (Sutton, 1986a) in which children are guided by their own speech. Forms of rhythm may be clapping, nursery rhymes, chanting and singing. Although these activities may be evidenced in special and mainstream schools, only through conductive pedagogy are they used specifically within the practice of motor and social skill learning (Forrai, 1999).

Akos and Akos (1991) suggest that if the caregiver of a child with a motor disorder can get very early help and instruction in the methods of CE, then appropriate intercerebral co-operation becomes possible. Subsequently, the dynamic relationship between caregiver and child that is essential for personality development will be initiated. The intercerebral field will then gradually expand to comprise other family members and children of the same age. In this way, through concerted support and guidance from the caregiver, a child will

increasingly learn to temper the developmental delay associated with problems of motor control.

CE is not without its critics. Some antagonists in the Disabled People's Movement view CE as working uncritically within the medical model of disability, in which people with disabilities are required to conform to society's norms and to adapt to fit a world that marginalises or excludes them (Oliver, 1989). But Read (1998) counters this, arguing that if CE offers opportunities for disabled children to make their bodies work for them, to increase children's sense of well-being and to enable them to act in ways that have personal worth and meaning, then that is something worth defending. Moreover, I would argue that the emphasis on the medical model serves only to bracket and marginalise the practice of CE and that models should be used with caution (see Section 1.3). Read's (1998) argument is persuasive, not just for children with motor disorders, but for children with other learning difficulties who perhaps do not conform to what society requires of them. What is persuasive about Read's (1998) argument is that it refers to familiar notions of autonomy, independence and personal control which are well-founded features of Western individualism.

Sharon (1985) argued that the multilevel work of conductors challenges the discrete professionalism of others, whilst Thorburn (1987) argued that CE devalues the work of special schools. Around the same time, Stewart (1988) commented that early media attention on CE in Hungary also detracted from the valuable work being achieved in the United Kingdom. So a controversy has been constructed and played out in the division between special education teachers/practitioners and conductors.

4.7.3 Summary

There are apparent choices to be made by parents of children with motor disorders regarding their opportunities for educational development. There is a choice of a special school, mainstream school or the pedagogical practice of CE. The background of CE and its theoretical and philosophical underpinnings have been critically discussed, illustrating how CE takes an alternative approach to the education of children with motor disorders by embracing a holistic approach. Since CE is a relatively new and alternative approach to the education of children with motor disorders, research into CE has hitherto been preoccupied with attempts to establish its effectiveness when compared to more traditional approaches

in the United Kingdom, those of a special school setting with additional therapeutic interventions. But such research has been viewed as problematic, and it is to issues of effectiveness that the chapter now turns.

4.7.4 Research into effectiveness

CE is not freely available in the United Kingdom as a choice of education for parents of children with motor disorders, since LEAs have, more often than not, resisted requests from parents for funding; CE costs almost twice as much, per capita, as a special school placement. Thus parents must, as a result, justify CE as an appropriate choice for their child (Owens, 2000). CE is not freely available on the following grounds.

Firstly, the system was transferred to the United Kingdom from Hungary in 1987 and some have argued that the system cannot be transplanted to other countries in its original form due to problems in historical, cultural and social differences (Bairstow and Cochrane, 1993; MacKay, 1995; Weber, 1995). Within the United Kingdom CE has been viewed as an unsubstantiated, innovative pedagogical practice, threatening the status quo of traditional forms of treatment by therapeutic professionals (Taylor and Emery, 1995). It has been suggested that the scepticism towards accepting innovative practices results from the need to protect children from 'potentially disruptive and undesirable trials of innovative options that eventually prove to be without value' (Bochner, Center, Chapiro and Donelly, 1996:191).

Secondly, acceptance of CE in the United Kingdom appears to be contingent upon its positive benefit over conventional treatments (Owens, 2000). Therefore, much British research to date has concentrated on studies evaluating the effectiveness of CE in its own right and also when compared with more conventional forms of therapy (Cochrane, Bairstow and Hur, 1991; MacKay, McCool, Cheseldine and McCartney, 1993; Hur and Cochrane, 1995; Hur, 1997). Evaluation studies have also been conducted in other countries such as Germany (Weber and Rochel, 1992) and Australia (Sigafoos, Elkins and Kerr, 1993; Coleman, King and Reddihough, 1995; Bochner et al, 1999). Yet others have attempted to evaluate CE by comparing the practice between countries (Stukat, 1995). What these studies have in common are their conclusions that CE is no more effective than more conventional forms of therapy for children with motor disorders.

Moreover, the much cited, but negative, report by Bairstow, Cochrane and Hur (1993) which stated that CE is no more effective than a special school placement coupled with additional therapeutic interventions has done much to influence notions about the practice of CE in the United Kingdom. Yet this is now viewed as a methodologically flawed and biased study, performed at a time when CE in the United Kingdom was still in its infancy, and the report's findings should be viewed in this light (Catanese, 1995; Llewellyn, Owens and Hogan, 1997).

Recent meta-analyses have also concluded that CE is no more effective than other forms of treatment (Reddihough, King, Coleman and Catanese, 1998; Pedersen, 2000). Ludwig, Leggett and Harstall (2000) concluded that no studies have been effective in themselves, and therefore argue that there is no evidence of the effectiveness of CE.

These studies have failed to take into account possible outcomes with respect to the child's family and social factors. Moreover, Appleton and Minchom (1991) advocate that one further factor should be given priority in measures of effectiveness of any intervention, that of parental confidence in their own ability to 'act as advocates for their child in the complex and punishing environments of special educational provision' (p.35). Certainly, these factors need to be considered. Many professionals and researchers in the field now strongly recommend that future research should avoid evaluation that is set in a narrow framework of programme evaluation (Catanese, Coleman, King and Reddihough, 1995; Llewellyn et al, 1997; Sutton, 1998; Owens, 2000).

Accordingly, some researchers have focused on the perceptions of parents of children who are receiving or who have received CE. Some studies have investigated the viewpoints of parents who had taken their children to the Peto Institute in Budapest (Hill, 1990; Mackenzie, Booth and Ritchie, 1991; Read, 1992b), while others have studied parents' perspectives of CE in Australia (Cooper, 1986; Sigafoos, Elkins, Hayes, Gunn, Couzens and Roberts, 1991), and Sweden (Lind, 2000). Researchers in the United Kingdom have also investigated parental views (Hur and Cochrane, 1995; Read, 1995; Lie and Holmes, 1996; Llewellyn, 1999; Owens, 2000).

Many of these studies have reported increased parental satisfaction in their child's progress through the parents themselves being involved in their child's education. However, one

striking finding that appears in various guises within these studies is that many parents perceive administrators to possess limited knowledge of CE. One parent stated, for example,

> *'professionals tend not to have any experience of conductive education but nevertheless do not hesitate to give their views, even in the absence of any real knowledge'* (Read, 1995:42).

Other commentators argue that certain facilities should be available as a right and should not have to meet stringent scientific tests of their effectiveness, and others still argue for ecologically contextually systematic studies of the child and family with multi-method studies (Llewellyn et al, 1997).

The most recent study to date has examined a newly established CE centre in the north of England, comparing its provision with existing services through the viewpoints of parents and professionals (Swain and Walker, 2003). This study evidenced a power struggle between these two opposing groups and, because of this and the accompanying social closure by professionals, opportunities for change were limited. Importantly, the voices of disabled users of the centre were absent, as this was considered an issue neither by professionals nor some parents, with both sides firmly entrenched in the medical model of disability.

How then do children with motor disorders themselves conceptualise the problematic areas of educational choice? Upon reaching the stage at which they are fully able to articulate their own conceptions on the matter, what do they think? A family forum held at the 51st annual meeting of the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, held in Portland, Oregon in 1997, included a contribution to the proceedings of the conference by a young man with CP. This individual gave voice and insight into key issues of his life, saying that,

> *'he should take charge of decisions affecting his life, that he should be able to make choices which open doors for him, that professionals should talk to him and not to his parents'* (original emphasis) (Hart, 1998:69).

The position here is that individual agency has been withdrawn from disabled people, that they are rendered powerless, and this may be indicative of the views held by many

individuals with disabilities in general and motor disorders specifically. Their view of the future is one of empowerment whereby agency and choice in decision-making reverts back to the individual.

Within Taylor and Emery's (1995) study of professionals' knowledge of CE, paediatric-related professionals' opinions were sought, but an overriding omission was that of education administrators' opinions. It would appear important to explore the knowledge and experiences of education administrators as these individuals manage children's access to educational resources and school placement during the statementing process.

4.7.5 Summary

It has been shown that the effectiveness of CE has been the major component of research investigations, but these are now considered by some to be of limited use in such a field of enquiry. In other words, more qualitative and multi-method investigations are now warranted. But there are issues now pertaining to the inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools wherever possible. So the question arises as to how CE, as practised at NICE, enables children to become fully included in mainstream education.

4.7.6 Towards dynamic inclusion

One function of education is to ensure the integration of individuals into society – to create an integrated citizenship in adult life (Oliver, 1996). Taking a recent historical perspective, and following Foucault (1977) to a great extent, Oliver (1996) suggests that the special education system has 'functioned to exclude disabled people not just from the education process but from mainstream social life' (p.79). If this idea is accepted, then parents of children with motor disorders must pursue avenues other than special schools if they wish their child to be fully integrated into citizenship. However, CE aims to exclude children with motor disorders from neither mainstream school nor mainstream social life. Rather there is an active commitment within the CE movement to develop children's abilities in such a manner as to foster a dynamic inclusion process (Kozma, 1995; Brown, Pemberton, Salts, Zimmerman and Zsargo, 1998; Sutton, 1986b; 1999b; 2002a, 2002b). It is worth quoting from Sutton (1986b), who explicates the notions of both Vygotskiian theory and dynamic inclusion succinctly,

> *'one may conceive of, say, a 4-year-old child with cerebral palsy under our present dispensation, admitted to a normal nursery school in an electric wheelchair if there are ramps and other adaptations and perhaps also non-teaching help. This is integration at the child's actual or present level of development, with the child's future potential, motoric, orthopaedic, social, affective and intellective, probably prey to the deleterious systematic efforts of this passive-acceptance provision. Or one might conceive of the same child in quite other circumstances, undergoing a course of conductive education, which aims to bring that child to a level where subsequent admission to school will be accompanied by no such facilitating (but limiting) impedimenta and where the subsequent systematic efforts will be of an altogether different order. This is a correspondingly higher level of integration, based upon potential, not present, development: one that has had to be worked for and achieved <u>via</u> special educational methods but which has a far greater substance, personal, educational and social, than the mechanistic solution of merely placing handicapped children among their peers'* (p.10)

Sutton (1999b) also argues that children are only essentially included in school if they take a meaningful part in the proceedings by active participation. To exemplify,

> *'a child who is seated incorrectly may be uncomfortable, even in pain, and cannot see what the teacher is doing or the work in hand. If the result is a child who is inattentive or de-motivated, what is being achieved?'* (p.22).

The argument goes, then, that there is an expectation for children within a CE programme to become fully included in their social worlds, primarily through moving from CE to mainstream schooling (Sutton, 1996). CE helps to increase mobility, dexterity, attention and application, and intrinsic motivation, all of which are conducive to participating in mainstream school life. The ultimate goal of CE is for children with motor disorders to achieve *orthofunction*, achieved by stimulating the developmental process in such a way as to continue when the child has been included in mainstream school. Orthofunction is constructed as a way of children functioning independently without the need for physical aids or assistance, after having mastered the effects of the motor disorder despite their difficulties (Sutton, 1986b; 1989). Yet this does not mean that the child should have learned to walk and be continent. Rather orthofunctionality is judged by a child's ability to act, to adapt to new situations, to solve problems.

If full educational inclusion is to be achieved for a child with a motor disorder, one feature of this is that the child should be fully prepared for such inclusion. CE helps a child prepare for inclusion by the nature of its group work. The group plays a bridging role, in that the child is able to contribute to a group setting outside of the immediate family,

before onward progression to mainstream school. CE defines its own position here in that it develops the preconditions to ensure that a child should not simply be integrated as a matter of course, but should play an active, meaningful part in the inclusion process (Kozma, 1995).

It is therefore argued that CE poses no challenges to inclusion (Sutton, 1986b). Instead, proponents of CE construct inclusion as a dynamic, developmental process. CE, in this sense, is viewed as a finite, special educational process with its goal of orthofunction, and Sutton (1986b) argues that for many pupils, CE results in a level of inclusion that might call into question their continuing special needs.

Furthermore, the type and severity of some children's difficulties present certain barriers to total inclusion (Croll and Moses, 2000) and therefore some form of (perhaps temporary) separate educational provision must be viewed as a positive precursor to inclusion. Additionally, Christensen (1996) argues that a wholesale return to mainstream classrooms for children previously being taught in a special school will not provide social justice to all students without a prior basic transformation of those mainstream classrooms. So proponents of CE do not construct it as segregated provision, rather as a step towards dynamic inclusion (Foundation for Conductive Education, 2002).

4.8 Critical reflection

A motor disorder such as CP has hitherto been described as a medical condition, implying once more the pervasive effects of the medical model of disability. Yet proponents of CE acknowledge that developmental limitations are further increased through inappropriate interaction between parent and infant. From this we can see that interaction and communication are vital factors affecting the course of CP. The educational approach of CE emphasises the reciprocal nature of communication between the conductor and the child, which supports the premise of social constructionist psychology – that is, humans develop, act, think, communicate and grow in conjunction with others on a social plane. In this respect, CP may have a physical/neurological base but this may be overcome through the active and dedicated communication initiated and maintained by the conductor, reciprocated by the child when possible.

Inclusion is a contentious issue at present and the debate rages about what it is in theory and in practice, and also how it should or could be achieved. Upon reflection, I concur with those who construct inclusion as an idealistic concept which will not fully work in practice for many reasons. However, for some children and their parents, attendance at a mainstream school is the ultimate educational goal and for them this is the right choice, actively worked towards. For others it is not. However, Chapter three has shown how inclusion is high on the Government's agenda, also how proponents construct CE as aiming towards dynamic inclusion through the process of preparing children with motor disorders to solve everyday problems from self-care to aspects of the national curriculum. As a recent OFSTED report on NICE states,

> *'The National Institute of Conductive Education is a very good school...successful in fulfilling its aim to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum based on the Foundation Stage Curriculum and the National Curriculum programmes of study, within the overall framework of Conductive Education...Due to effective planning, clear expectations, and the consistent management of behaviour, pupils make very good progress'* (OFSTED, 2004:3-5).

CHAPTER 5
PARENTAL RIGHTS AND THE CONCEPT OF CHOICE

5.1 Introduction

The fundamental nature of the research problem will be finally identified and summarised in Chapter five. In my construction of the problem area, this chapter will be a culmination of theory and research illustrated in the foregone chapters, in that the research objective, aims and questions are clearly constructed and articulated. In essence, notwithstanding recent rhetoric of parental choice and movements towards mainstream inclusion, the evidence suggests that not all parents wish their child to be enrolled in mainstream or special schools and actively seek alternative education options. However, choice is viewed as a problematic construct and the research seeks to explore the reasons why parental choice of CE is sometimes not granted.

5.2 Parental rights

Research and legislation agree that many parents want a 'powerful say in the way their child is educated' (DfEE, 1998:11) and the 'right to express a preference for a placement in either a mainstream or a special school' (DfEE, 1998:15). However, although parental choice and involvement in the statementing process suggest a consumer rights model of access to educational resources within a market force approach to education (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999), parents actually have less rights to exercise compared with LEAs whose decision-making powers are upheld by recent legislation (Paige-Smith, 1997).

For parents of children with motor disorders, there is much controversy over selecting the appropriate or preferred school. Whilst more information concerning schools and their resources is available to parents than ever before (see Section 3.2), and notwithstanding political rhetoric on ideals of equity (see Section 3.4), the fact remains that not all parents are granted the school of their choosing.

5.3 The concept of choice

Neither non-maintained special schools nor independent schools are considered to be included in selection options for parents, which somewhat limits flexibility of choice. Previous findings have demonstrated that the denial of parental choice of CE exemplifies such a lack of opportunity for children with motor disorders (Owens, 2000).

It has been suggested in the previous chapter that independent special schools such as NICE charge higher fees than mainstream schools (see Section 4.7.4), also that negative research reports do much to denigrate CE (Bairstow et al, 1993). Notwithstanding, if parents' preferences for CE were to be granted, clearly there would be psychosocial as well as educational advantages (Plowden, 1967; Stillman, 1994). Family satisfaction, contentment and commitment might lead to the child doing well at the school, as the child's parents would approach their child's education positively, without the negative interactions and possible adversarial process incurred in fighting for that placement. The effectiveness of such alternative practices might then be subsequently evaluated, possibly finding effectiveness in terms of positive benefits both for the individual child and also for the practice itself.

If societal progress depends upon the problem-solving skills of its population, then not many would deny that children must be nurtured by a caring society in order to develop to their fullest potential. Moreover, the Government's latest strategy for SEN purports to 'remove barriers to achievement' (DfES, 2004). If this is the case, then institutions that offer CE (such as NICE) that aim to enable children with motor disorders to solve problems in ways that work for them to the best of their ability, should not be overlooked for their value simply on the basis of insufficient positive research outcomes (Owens, 2000). The same may be so of alternative educational approaches to other childhood conditions - the arguments within this thesis therefore do not only apply to CE, rather they encompass a variety of educational contexts and approaches.

5.4 Research objective

The rationale for the research developed out of a review of literature surrounding the statementing process, which revealed a lack of awareness of the experiences of education administrators, and also previous findings which suggested that personnel involved in the statementing process held little understanding of what they were providing (Owens, 2000).

My research objective was therefore to provide a critical social psychological enquiry into the discourses that pervade the world of administrators who manage access to special educational resources. One particular point of interest was the ways in which administrators reach decisions about school placement for children with SEN, exploring the meanings individuals construct for themselves within these discourses. These administrators were defined as any administrators, working in the area of SEN within LEAs, who are responsible for decisions regarding the assessment, statementing and school placement for children with SEN. Although these individuals encompass a wide variety of job titles and descriptions (see Section 7.3.3), for the purpose of this research I will refer to these individuals collectively as 'education administrators'.

Because the research enjoyed a collaboration between the University of Wolverhampton and NICE, I was particularly interested in exploring those LEAs who are geographically located so as to receive requests for placements at NICE, and the study was therefore confined to the Midlands area of the United Kingdom.

Education administrators are more often than not reluctant to grant the request of parents who express a preference for a placement at NICE for their child with a motor disorder (Owens, 2000). It therefore seemed important to investigate what education administrators understand about the relevance of CE to the needs of the child (their knowledge-base) and what elements actually influence their decisions (personal values, assumptions, evidence-base, practicalities, legalities, funding, policy).

I therefore set out to explore education administrators' decision-making within the statementing process as they engage with and compare traditional forms of special education and CE, to examine how they justify their decisions of a child's school placement. Essentially, I sought to understand the ways in which education administrators construct their work from personal frames of reference, as opposed to organisational policy, and from their own language and discourses. It was from this perspective that I decided a qualitative approach would be more conducive to establishing a thorough understanding of the issues. It is also essential in disability and education issues to explore and describe established power relationships on many levels in order to explicate perceived (or otherwise) imbalances of power and the consequences of such imbalances (Read, 1998).

A qualitative approach to the research demanded that I remain open-minded, holding no prior assumptions or preconceived ideas of issues of importance to the respondents. However, this is problematic from within a constructionist paradigm and my prior assumptions might indeed have been influential in the research design phase. Notwithstanding, I decided to pose research aims and questions couched in very broad terms. With the research objective in mind, I constructed the following research aims and questions.

5.5 Research aims

1. To explore the statementing process from the perspective of education administrators.
2. Through the building of theory, grounded firmly in the data, to ultimately explain education administrators' constructions of the statementing process.
3. To analyse critically the discourse of 'choice' for parents of children with motor disorders.

5.6 Research questions

1. How do education administrators construct their experiences of school placement for children with motor disorders?
2. How does power affect the nature of choice available for parents seeking CE for their child?

5.7 Critical reflection

I have proposed within this chapter that psychosocial and educational advantages could be experienced if parents' preferences for CE were to be granted by education administrators. This is justified by reference both to previous findings (Plowden Report, 1967; Stillman, 1994) and also by way of acknowledging that sometimes parents may be right in their choice. Often we have choices made on our behalf by someone else, by an institution, by a profession, by a faceless bureaucrat who claims superior knowledge. Speaking as a parent, I question who is best to decide what is right for our children? Who has the power to make decisions that profoundly affect that child's future?

This is because knowledge (of education, for example) is seen to change from culture to culture and historically. It follows from this that statementing officers, educational

psychologists and other decision-makers act according to their perceived understanding at any given time, in any given context. Decisions made by them are bound up in rhetorical politics. Some parents, on the other hand, usually have a long-lasting, maintained and intimate understanding of their child, and may have done so since the birth of that child. They know their history, their present level of being and possibly also what they may accomplish in the future. However, some parents may not have such a thorough understanding of their child, yet it must be assumed that some parents at least do.

The positive benefits of granting parental choice have clearly been laid out in this chapter. It may be suggested that disadvantages could be experienced if a child were to be granted a placement at NICE. For example, segregation from peers and local community are said to be detrimental effects of such a placement. I would counter that such detrimental effects are assumptions which, once more, have been socially constructed as a means of bolstering the rhetoric of inclusion. Evidence might exist to suggest that a placement at NICE would involve segregation from peers and local community. However, if segregation from peers and local community were to happen, where is the evidence to suggest this leads to disadvantage? Some children may experience social exclusion in this respect, but this is not so for all children. Individual differences appear to be overlooked in the striving to include all children in mainstream education.

CHAPTER 6
METHODOLOGIES:
INTRODUCTION TO A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

6.1 Overview

Chapter six will introduce the overall strategy and justification for using a qualitative approach to the research. It will also explain how the research incorporated two distinct phases of analysis with a duality of qualitative methods adopted, those of constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1977), both analyses being driven from a social constructionist orientation (Burr, 1995).

6.2 A qualitative approach – theoretical concerns

The traditional approach taken to social scientific research has hitherto been well-established positivism, wherein hypotheses are tested through controlled experiments and the results are then generalised to a given population (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Yet this traditional approach to research has been so hegemonic in the Western world that other ways of conceptualising and conducting research have largely been overlooked until recently (Krueger, 1998).

Now, however, it has been acknowledged that this positivistic approach to enquiry, although having demonstrated its great worth in many areas, actually often limits thinking by sometimes overlooking valuable data. This has been shown to be the case where research into CE, for example, has concentrated on positivistic enquiries into its effectiveness when compared with conventional forms of special education, thereby overlooking personal viewpoints and experiences of major stakeholders. Hence the emergence of new forms of social science enquiry under the rubric of qualitative methodologies, particularly in social constructionist psychology. Social constructionist psychology offers a different conception of research, in which multi-method, interpretive, interactive and involved investigations are advocated (Kvale, 1992). From this perspective, research into CE may be approached from a different perspective, by exploring the

experiences of individuals involved in providing this service, through examination of the language they use to describe and construct those experiences.

At the outset of this project, research into the area of special education resource management in terms of education administrators' constructions and perspectives was lacking in the literature. Therefore positivistic research methodologies in terms of hypothesis-testing and quantification were not considered a viable option. Thus an alternative avenue of enquiry was to be designed, a more productive route being to conduct a qualitative exploration from which to build theory and from which working propositions might be generated to inform future research.

Qualitative research appeals to researchers who feel restricted by orthodox positivistic canons of natural science; it also appeals to those who prefer to work with participants' natural language, either spoken or written, as signs of phenomena of interest, rather than with numerics (Frankel and Devers, 2001). Since natural language is often the focus of qualitative research, many researchers advocate the use of interviews as data source, as this method of data collection generates much rich data (Smith, 1995) and by using an interpretive approach to the analysis of such. Qualitative research explores and emphasises experiences, the descriptions and meanings of a person's lived experiences, which are usually verbally articulated and constructed (Henwood, 1996). Moreover, there are differences between objectivist and constructionist versions of qualitative research, the stance taken here being constructionist (see Section 6.3.2). Therefore, it is argued that the research findings are considered a co-construction, or a joint creation, an intersubjective product of the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Moreover, many have argued that some issues are far too complex to be investigated through quantitative means and that to gain a sufficiently sensitive and incisive understanding of an individual's concerns, a researcher sometimes cannot resort to rating scales on a questionnaire for example (Burman, 1994). In the case of CE, it is important to elicit the experiences of individuals involved in its delivery in order to complement existing evaluative research.

Importantly, qualitative methods have gained credibility as valid research tools in education and psychology and there are excellent examples of the use of such methods in

critical analyses of special education (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). Examples include recent studies in childhood disability, which have explored the perceptions of service-users from the viewpoints of children and parents of children with motor disorders (Llewellyn, 1999; Owens, 2000). This method of enquiry, exploring service-users' experiences, offers an alternative understanding of issues involved in providing appropriate resources and school placement for children with motor disorders.

The recent adoption of various qualitative methodologies in the fields of health, education and psychology have established and enhanced the legitimacy of qualitative enquiry in different areas of expertise both in research and practice (Atkinson, 1990). Although proponents of qualitative research now advocate a minimal justification for its use, it remains important to show its relevance to this project.

6.3 A qualitative approach - justified

In all research processes, the initial starting point must be the research question, as this defines the global approach taken to the research and the method of enquiry used for that purpose (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). It is also important that the epistemological orientation of the researcher is considered when designing research (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). These two features, the research question and the researcher's epistemological orientation, will now be addressed in turn.

6.3.1 The research questions

As stated above, the starting point when designing any research must be the research questions. A constructionist grounded theory methodology (see Chapter 7), employed in phase one of the research, offered the means with which to address the first research question:

1. How do education administrators construct their experiences of school placement for children with motor disorders? (Exploration, description and explanation).

The final research question was designed to take into account the wider and deeper implications of the grounded theory findings, and was addressed in phase two of the research, by the application of a Foucauldian discourse analysis:

2. How does power affect the discourse of 'choice' for parents seeking CE for their child? (Explanation and critique).

In asking these questions, the aims of the research were considered in terms of 'exploring', 'describing' and 'explaining'. Exploration of education administrators' constructions was achieved through the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Description and interpretation of these constructions were achieved through applying grounded theory principles to the interview transcripts, the analysis taking the form of theory development.

In asking the second research question, the final aim was to analyse critically educational/school choice for parents of children with motor disorders within the intricacies of power relations. This final question took the research on to a more critical level of qualitative enquiry through the application of a Foucauldian discourse analysis.

My research questions are therefore broad in scope and do not lend themselves to a positivistic form of enquiry. In other words, to answer these particular questions, a qualitative approach was essential.

6.3.2 Epistemological orientation of the researcher

I embraced a social constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995) within which to situate this research. Social constructionism is an umbrella term that describes a set of approaches taken towards contemporary psychological research that are opposed to the positivistic empiricism of mainstream psychology (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Social constructionists are primarily concerned with understanding the ways in which social and psychological reality are constructed through social interaction (Gergen, 1985; Burr, 1995).

The roots of social constructionism come from a complexity of influences such as phenomenology, the sociology of knowledge and social psychology, leading to a view that human psychological processes are conditional upon language, cultural practices and structures of human communities. In this sense, social reality is negotiated, bargained and constituted through the process of speakers' talk, through the discourse they use. Stam (2002) posits an historical symbiosis between the psychological and the social (the subjective and the objective). Such a symbiosis results in the reality that is taken for

granted is of a constructed nature. Reality is seen to be negotiated by individuals in order to make sense of their everyday world, simultaneously contributing to its development through language.

Language is viewed not as a transparent medium for conveying thought, rather it is constitutive, in that it both constructs and defines the social world through its use (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001). Social constructionist researchers therefore provide multiple ways of constructing social reality rather than reflecting it, as they realise that there are various ways of seeing and describing it: 'there are 'knowledges' rather than one 'knowledge' ' (Willig, 2001:7).

The fundamental premise of social constructionism, then, is that knowledges of the social world are conceptualised as historically, culturally and linguistically specific, and are constructed and understood through language and social interaction (Burr, 1995). A social constructionist approach to this research therefore offers an alternative understanding to much previous research in the area of special education and school choice, demonstrating the possibility of critically analysing and deconstructing previously held realist assumptions of education and special education.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has so far critically discussed the qualitative approach taken to the research. In addition, the research questions and the epistemological orientation of the researcher have been presented in order to justify the global approach. Yet all research will be subjected to a critical gaze and how its findings may be evaluated and critiqued are important points to raise. Criteria for evaluation of this research may be found in Chapter eleven. This chapter now turns to the more specific strategy adopted within the qualitative paradigm: a dual methodology, in a phased approach.

6.5 Strategy: a dual methodology

I chose a combination of methodologies in the form of a constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990; 1995; 2000) and a Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1977), a choice made due to the different research questions to be addressed and my own epistemological orientation. Importantly, the discourse analysis was to be applied based on the findings of the grounded theory study. At first glance, it would appear that these two

methods are theoretically incompatible. However, I will first explain why I believe they are, in essence, complementary, before moving on to describe the theoretical base of each chosen methodology, thereby justifying their use in the context of this research.

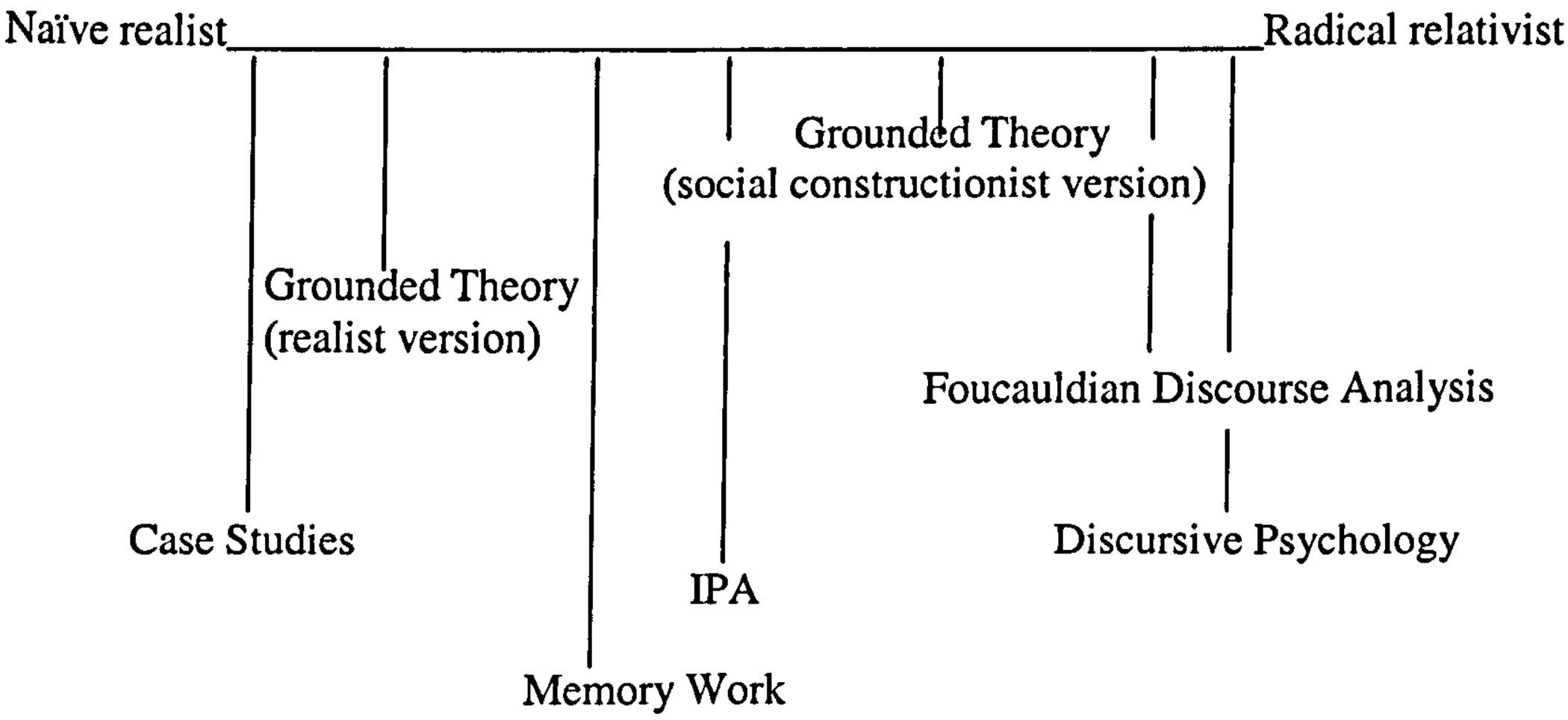
Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally intended that grounded theory should be strictly realist in orientation, other versions of grounded theory have since developed, and the method is now viewed as atheoretical, researchers applying their own theoretical perspective to their research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). For example, Charmaz (1990) introduced a social constructionist version of grounded theory, arguing that categories do not *emerge from the data*, rather they are *constructed* through the process of interaction between the researcher and the data. This is based on the precept that categories cannot exist prior to the process of categorisation. The act of imposing categories onto data is one in which the researcher is implicated as a vital contributor. There is an overt acknowledgement that the questions that are asked of the data and the researcher's epistemological background shape the research process and therefore also the findings (Willig, 2001).

Clarke (1990) pre-empted Charmaz (2000), asserting that categories, concepts and theories do not emerge from data, but rather the data themselves are constructed from many previously selected events and interpreted along the course of the research project. Therefore respondents' own words and interpretations are recast in new analytical terms by the researcher. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) also suggest that the notion of theory generation as opposed to theory discovery highlights the process of inserting new discourses into old systems of meaning. So grounded theory may be applied on the basis of realist or social constructionist principles.

On the contrary, Foucauldian discourse analysis is strictly social constructionist in its orientation, viewing events, objects and subjects as being constructed through discourse. Therefore, it is believed that the paradox of the (seemingly) contrasting types of methodologies may be resolved: the two methodologies are complementary as they are both employed from a social constructionist frame of reference. This may be further illustrated in the following model.

Willig (2001) locates six different qualitative research methods along a continuum of epistemological positions, ranging from *naïve realist* to *radical relativist.* Using Madill, Jordan and Shirley's (2000) classification of epistemologies, Willig (2001) shows that realist methods include case studies and traditional grounded theory, contextual constructionist methods include memory work, interpretive phenomenological analysis and a social constructionist version of grounded theory, and radical relativist (or radical constructionist) methods include Foucauldian discourse analysis and discursive psychology. However, some researchers argue that discursive psychology, in its adoption of conversation analysis principles, is somewhat realist in orientation (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Antaki, 1994; Edwards, 2001). From Figure 1 below, it may be seen that a social constructionist version of grounded theory and Foucauldian discourse analysis may both be located on a contextual constructionist position.

Fig 1 – Epistemological Positions Associated with Six Qualitative Research Methods (from Willig, 2001)



This model offers further support for the claim that the two methodologies are indeed complementary. The theory and procedure behind the two chosen methodologies will each be described in detail in chapters seven and nine respectively.

6.6 Critical reflection

The social constructionist perspective afforded me opportunities to construct my position as researcher on many different levels as the research progressed. My position shifted over time and from interview context to interview context, particularly at the beginning of the data collection stage and, again, more towards the end of the process. Participants also negotiated their role within the interview dyad, and one individual in particular dramatically altered the tone of the conversation once it had become apparent that I was *au fait* with the language of the statementing process and SEN. In the absence of a reflexive stance, I might have failed to notice such change in my respondent (Russell and Kelly, 2002) and changes within my own position.

A social constructionist perspective therefore informed the research by continually making me aware of my position in relation to my respondents as well as their position in relation to parents. But more so, it enabled me to focus on language and its use within the SEN arena. But this brings forth certain limitations, the main problem being that such a fine-grained (and global) focus on language may limit the possibilities for alternative avenues of enquiry.

For example, my research was concerned with the constructions of education administrators as they engage with issues around school choice and the extent to which a placement at NICE may be granted. This inherently precludes statistical data that is available which might show the number of children offered a place set against the number of children refused. However, it was not my intention to pursue such a positivist account, rather it was sufficient for my purposes to know that some parents are not granted their choice and, as previously stated, this research and its findings might equally apply to other areas of SEN, for example, children with sensory difficulties, autism, and so forth.

An important aspect of maintaining a social constructionist viewpoint in this research became apparent at the outset. The language framing notions of disability and 'choice' permitted me to acknowledge that both phenomena are situated within a field of power relations with language use a central feature. How language is used when talking about such issues may serve to position administrators or parents as the more powerful or quite the opposite and it was important to me to understand how this happens in practice.

CHAPTER 7
METHODOLOGY I:
PHASE I - CONSTRUCTIONIST GROUNDED THEORY

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the theoretical concerns of a constructionist grounded theory, and how the method relates to the first research question. It will also set out the data collection and procedure used for phase one of the research. The design (semi-structured interviews), development of the interview schedule, sampling, respondents and access issues, the interview context and texts for analysis will all be considered. Also addressed here are problems encountered in data collection, before a brief overview is provided of the way in which the data were analysed through the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Limitations of the methodology will also be addressed.

7.2 Theoretical concerns

I approached the first phase of the research through the application of a constructionist grounded theory methodology, used to address the first research question,

1. How do education administrators construct their experiences of school placement for children with motor disorders?

Understanding education administrators' constructions and reasons for the decisions they make is considered important to many people, not least of which are the parents and carers of children who require their services. Such an understanding may be used to provide service-users with insights into education administrators' practices and perspectives, as well as to inform future policy development. Since there is no psychological literature explicitly concerned with this area, grounded theory methodology was used to explore and identify salient features of education administrators' constructions that would aid in the generation of a theory from which other researchers might then begin subsequent investigations.

Grounded theory is one methodology for studying social phenomena, made available to social scientists nearly half a century ago (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to gather knowledge of the social world. Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally argued that investigators should enter a research situation with no prior preconceptions (although see Charmaz, 1990; 1995; 2000) and create, refine and revise theory in light of further collected data. The grounded theory method therefore comprises a set of procedures designed to promote the systematic study and representation of the meaning of data. The goal of the method is to develop a theory that is accountable to the data, and the gathering of data and their analysis proceed concurrently (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These are the basic tenets of grounded theory.

Charmaz (1990; 1995; 2000) points out however, that although many grounded theory studies reflect the original conception of an objectivist or realist approach, other researchers may also use grounded theory methods from other vantage points, thus allowing for more diverse and varied data collection methods and theoretical orientations. In this way, grounded theorists may still research topics 'without presupposing narrow objectivist methods and without assuming the truth of their subsequent analyses' (Charmaz, 2000:511). Phase one of the research was based entirely upon Charmaz's (2000) version of social constructionist grounded theory.

In line with a constructionist perspective, I believe the research process was enriched through the interplay between myself and the data. This interplay permitted me to draw upon my own personal experience and constructions as a means of developing and constructing categories and concepts as an additional means of analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that experience is an analytic device used to stimulate thought and reflection about the data being studied.

Importantly, this introspection, drawing upon my own experience to make comparisons with the data, permits only one perspective (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to be drawn upon and reported, even though I may possibly have held many interpretations of the gathered data along the course of the research process. What is important to consider is how to maintain focus and clarity. My own experiences helped me to construct the framework for the grounded theory through teasing out what elements of that experience could be applied in a theoretical manner. This will become apparent in Chapter 8. The findings from the

constructionist grounded theory study therefore represent only one understanding out of a possible multitude of ways (a social construction), and I also acknowledge that, had the research been conducted by a different researcher, the analysis (see Chapter eight) may have been constructed in an alternative framework altogether.

When the most coherent grounded theory had been completed as far as possible and no new data were forthcoming, I considered it necessary to take the research onto a more critical level. The application of a Foucauldian discourse analysis provided the means to gain a deeper understanding of how power relations that were evidenced in respondents' constructions affect parental choice of school. This phase of the research will be described and justified in Chapter nine.

7.3 Design – semi-structured interviews

Through an understanding of the various qualitative data collection methods that might have been applicable to this research, I concluded that semi-structured interviews would provide the rich data needed for this phase. Interviews are the most widely used means of data collection within qualitative research (Willig, 2001) because interview data may be analysed in many different ways, for example, grounded theory and different traditions within discourse analysis. Other qualitative methodological designs such as the diary method, questionnaires or survey-type designs (Robson, 1993) might not have delivered the quality and depth of information required to answer the research question. I had initially assumed that education administrators would be overworked and therefore their time limited (indeed this was also articulated by respondents in the preliminary study), surveys and questionnaires might have provided very little by way of return. I considered that the personal approach afforded by interviewing would be more likely to be well received.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore how education administrators think about issues of decision-making and to gain a more complete understanding of resource provision and school allocation for children with motor disorders. Features that affect educational decision-making processes would be created through the interactions between people, in the context of legislation and organisational policy, and also through personal beliefs and values. Moreover, as little is known of how education administrators personally

engage with parental school preference during the statementing process, an in-depth exploratory approach was important and, indeed, demanded by the focus of the research.

Semi-structured interviews have many advantages over the more structured type, not least of which was that I was free to probe more interesting areas as and when they arose, not being restricted to directed questions (Smith, 1995). In addition, I wished to follow the respondents' line of thinking, interests or specific concerns, and in so doing, I hoped to establish a balanced power dynamic.

An important issue of note when conducting interviews is one of confidentiality. Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2000) raise concerns regarding the protection of confidentiality, both of participants and third parties mentioned within transcribed narratives. The main problem, the authors argue, is that third parties mentioned in conversations have not given their consent to have their details circulated in this way. For reasons of ethics, confidentiality and privacy, I have withheld the names and locations of employment of all respondents from this thesis (see Section 7.3.3) and particularly from the text extracts within the analyses. Where third parties have been referred to within the interviews, their protection has therefore been assured.

7.3.1 Development of the interview schedule(s)

The need to produce an interview schedule forced me to think about issues that might be relevant to the respondents and also to consider areas of difficulty that might be encountered during the interviews (Smith, 1995).

Some researchers advocate reviewing the literature prior to beginning their study in order to become familiar with key terms and referents used by prospective respondents (Yin, 1999). However, others believe that this should be done after the research is underway so that the researcher is able to gain some initial understanding of the respondents' perspectives (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). In addition, to bring any prior theoretical conceptions to the interviews would mean that the findings drawn from the study would perhaps be shaped according to that particular viewpoint (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). A social constructionist perspective incorporates the notion of the active involvement of the researcher and hence prior conceptions are an integral aspect of conducting research.

I considered it sufficient to survey extant literature (theory and research) in the field of childhood disability and education provision (including CE), and previous qualitative research that focused on the viewpoints of parents and teachers of children with SEN. In this way, I was able to form questions pertinent to the subject area, but *my* constructions of the *respondents*' constructions would not subsequently be clouded by attempting to fit these experiences into some pre-existing theoretical framework. I developed an understanding of the discourses surrounding the field of SEN but, at the same time, understood that the findings would be constructed through a process of joint constructions between myself and the data.

For the purpose of this research then, I conducted a basic review of existing literature prior to and simultaneously with performing preliminary interviews with conductors working at NICE and senior members of staff working in special schools. These interviews were important in that they provided information on important issues relevant at the level of the child, parents, teachers and the classroom context. They were also valuable because I was able to gain information about the different forms of educational programmes for children with motor disorders and to develop an awareness of the theoretical basis of each. But, more importantly, I considered it essential to conduct an exploratory study in order to elicit important features to include in the interview schedule for use with LEA respondents (Frankel and Devers, 2001). The major literature review was conducted upon near completion of the grounded theory, by which time I was able to concentrate on the overarching and major shared meanings of importance to my respondents.

My preliminary study proceeded upon completion of the initial schedule which comprised certain themes, respondents being asked to comment on:

- their training (previous and on-going),
- their knowledge of CE and special school practices,
- the statementing process: assessment; writing the statement; school placement; the annual review,
- the SEN tribunal,
- parental involvement in the statementing process,
- parental choice/preference of school,

- specific cases pertaining to choice of school, and
- specific experiences of decision-making for complex cases.

This preliminary schedule may be found in Appendix I. Some themes were modified, omitted, or pursued in more depth as and when the need arose. For example, there were occasions during which respondents talked of events that were of relevance to them, replying somewhat at a tangent to the questions I had raised. At these times I considered it important to allow respondents to continue, while I followed their lead. This was a useful way of locating the interview relationship on an egalitarian footing, and allowing for a balanced power dynamic. The use of prompts aided in the data becoming deeper and also to clarify certain points raised. However, I generally found that respondents needed no prompting as I posed questions in an open-ended manner; they were enabled to speak in a more conversational way and many questions were spurred on by the previous answer.

In the light of incoming data, I modified the schedule somewhat to take into account further developments in my conceptual understanding. I subsequently redesigned the schedule for interviewing education administrators within LEAs as the focus of the interviews switched from being child- and school-centred to LEA-administration centred (Appendix II). It is possible to see how an interview schedule may develop dramatically over the course of the research, becoming more sophisticated as findings from one interview inherently shape the next and so forth. By the time I arrived at the penultimate interview, I was aware that in that instance I had no need for a schedule. I knew exactly what I would ask and also had expectations about the overall nature of the replies, which supported and confirmed my developing theoretical framework. From this it is clear to see the flexibility required in qualitative research.

7.3.2 Sampling

My strategy was to use purposeful sampling, whereby respondents were selected based on the purpose of the research (Robson, 1993). In other words, where education administrators' constructions of the statementing process were sought, I considered it purposeful to seek out those individuals possessing specialist insight and experience that would most benefit my investigation. Snowball sampling (Robson, 1993) also helped in identifying further individuals who might agree to take part in the study. For instance, I

asked each respondent whether they could recommend other members of the population of interest, colleagues and so on, and in this manner, the acquisition of participants snowballed.

My goal was to explore school choice and the statementing process in depth, therefore a considerable amount of time was given over to conducting interviews with a small number of selected individuals. Given the nature of the respondents' positions within LEAs, the interviews were considered to be elite interviews. Marshall and Rossman (1999) use the term 'elite' to refer to individuals who are 'influential, prominent and/or well-informed people in an organisation or community; they are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research' (p.113). Therefore, it was clear to see that administrators of all levels of seniority working in SEN departments in LEAs could be identified as elite respondents.

Elite interviewing has as many advantages as disadvantages (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Advantages include the provision of a wealth of valuable information primarily due to the positions elites hold within organisations. In other words, they can provide information on the relationships within and between their and other organisations. They might be familiar with the financial and legal aspects of the organisation. Additionally, they might be able to provide information regarding the organisation's history, policies and future strategies. Disadvantages include problematic access, principally because of their demanding work schedules and time constraints; sometimes they may be difficult to contact initially.

However, the main advantage for conducting elite interviews is that these individuals, being 'well practised at meeting the public and being in control' (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:114) are sometimes able to turn the interview to their advantage. In other words, they prefer an active interplay with the researcher, having been presented with an opportunity to display their knowledge and imagination. This was particularly relevant when I approached the research from a social constructionist perspective, in that power dynamics within the interview context are an important consideration. I had no intention of being constructed as the more powerful participant, and wished to allow for the formation of an egalitarian relationship. The respondents provided much rich data, as they were comfortable in discussing their areas of work from personal frames of reference within a non-threatening

interview context. Notwithstanding, from a social constructionist standpoint, it has to be acknowledged that 'elites' would be speaking from a more privileged position, thus their discourse would be powerful in its persuasiveness.

There is some debate in qualitative research regarding sample size, and Sandelowski (1995:183) states a good principle to follow,

> *'an adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that permits - by virtue of not being too large - the deep, case-oriented analysis that is a hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that results in - by virtue of not being too small - a new and richly textured understanding of experience'.*

In the context of this research, the target population was special education administrators in the Midlands of England who could potentially be asked, through the statementing process, for a placement at NICE in Birmingham. Therefore, this group of individuals was relatively small in itself, and purposeful sampling enabled the recruitment of individuals within this group who might be willing and able to participate. In this regard, I consider that the available participants represented a good sample size according to Sandelowski's (1995) principle.

Moreover, qualitative research does not depend upon numbers for the persuasiveness of its arguments, nor does it depend on a statistically representative sample (Sherrard, 1997). It is the language or text that is considered the most important feature of any qualitative data.

7.3.3 Respondents

In line with social constructionist philosophy, and as previously stated, my role in the research must be acknowledged. This being the case, it is here that attention is paid to this feature as I consider that I was also a participant in the research. Being a mature female research student, I performed all aspects of the research, from its inception, through data collection and analysis, to its closure.

Having no background or personal connections in the field of childhood disability and holding no specific political allegiance, I initially approached the research as a blank slate in many ways. However, there is one proviso. I have a child, now aged sixteen, and therefore have much experience of child development and the education system (see

Section 1.4). As a family, we experienced problems in the transition to secondary school in that our choice of school was restricted by the admissions procedure of the preferred school. This led to the notion that school preference and acceptance is no matter of course, but a process that has to be undertaken in order to provide the required education for one's child. Additionally, I had considered at that time that many more parents must experience difficulties in this regard, not least of whom are parents whose children experience more difficulties than most, and who are searching for an appropriate (for them) educational setting.

It is therefore proposed that I, although having limited experience of childhood disability and its educational consequences, brought aspects of my own experience as a mother to bear whilst conducting the interviews and in the subsequent analyses.

Using the sampling techniques presented above (see Section 7.3.2), I performed a total of seventeen interviews. Prior to interviewing administrators working in LEAs, eight interviews were conducted with individuals involved in the delivery of CE and special school provision. Five of these were performed with conductors working at NICE and three were accomplished with senior staff (head teachers and deputy head teachers) currently working in special schools for physically disabled children in the West Midlands area.

I did not use the data obtained from these preliminary interviews within the final analysis. This is because the fundamental basis of the research was to elicit an understanding of education administrators' views and constructions of the statementing process for children with SEN, these individuals comprising higher level education administrators working in LEAs. In all of the initial interviews it was found that no respondent could adequately account for the decisions ultimately made by education administrators, and I therefore considered it important to analyse only data taken directly from education administrators themselves.

Subsequently, nine interviews were performed with special education administrators working in SEN departments in LEAs in the West Midlands area. Criteria for respondents' inclusion in the study and final analysis were as follows:

- individuals must be currently working for LEAs; and
- individuals whose work with children with SEN involves them in the statementing process, either directly or indirectly.

Overall, any individuals considered to have input in the management or administration of access to special education resources and school placement were considered to be essential participants in the study.

The job titles of the respondents were as follows:

- Strategic Manager – Parent and Learner Support – SEN Assessment Service
- Team Leader SEN Services/Operations Manager
- Head of SEN
- Mainstream Advisory Teacher for the Physically Impaired
- Deputy Chief Educational Psychologist
- Chief Education Services Officer – Children's Services
- Principal SEN Officer
- Parent Partnership Officer
- Principal Statements and Review Officer

These are not an accurate reflection of the sequential nature of the interviews (in other words, respondents LEA1 - LEA9 respectively), as this might have resulted in the administrators' identities being disclosed when referencing quotations in the analysis. For ethical reasons I consider it appropriate to present their job titles randomly.

I believe the acquisition of such a diverse sample in terms of job title and position within the LEA hierarchy is a particular strength of the procedure for this research. Each individual was able to provide insight into the work of SEN divisions of LEAs from a different perspective that enabled the developing concepts within the grounded theory analysis to be thorough and refined.

7.3.4 Access to respondents and procedure

The director of NICE, Mr Andrew Sutton, was instrumental in identifying conductors willing and able to take part in the initial exploratory stage of the research. Following this, I made contact with senior staff in special schools by letter stating the general nature of the research and requesting their participation. Subsequently, I made contact in a similar manner with education administrators. All interviews within the study were made by appointment upon completion and return of an informed consent form.

The informed consent form was identical for all respondents (conductors and education administrators) and contained details regarding the proposed research contract between myself and the respondent (Smith, 1995). Respondents were asked to give their consent to tape-recording an interview that might last between thirty and sixty minutes. During this time they would be able to turn off the tape-recorder at any time they felt it necessary and they would be free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and privacy were assured, and respondents were informed that a hard copy of their own transcript would be hand-delivered to further ensure confidentiality. They would be able to comment on the transcript as they considered appropriate. Examples of both the initial letter of request and informed consent form may be found in Appendices III and IV.

Upon receipt of completed informed consent forms, I made personal telephone calls to respondents in order to arrange a time and date for the interviews to be conducted, subsequently supported by a letter of appreciation and confirmation of the appointment. The venue, date and time for the interviews were always arranged under the direction of the participants, as I believed it conducive to a good working relationship to afford the prospective respondents a high level of involvement in the process.

It was sometimes necessary for me to elaborate on the nature of the topics to be discussed so respondents might know in advance the overall nature of the enquiry. For example, one individual did not believe they would be of help as I had already spoken to a colleague working in the same department. I explained that I was interested in, not just official policy, but personal frames of reference too. This particular clarification resulted in the individual agreeing to participate in the research.

In one case, access to potential respondents was negotiated by my initially making contact with the Chief Education Services Officer of a LEA, who offered the names of colleagues best positioned to help with my research. This raised initial concern as to whether these individuals had given their permission for their names and contact details to be put forward. On this occasion, I approached these individuals with care, making no assumptions of their agreement to participate. This initial concern, however, proved to be unfounded and each individual was satisfied with my research intent and agreed to participate.

7.3.5 The interview context

All interviews were conducted in quiet, private interview rooms or offices at the workplaces of the respondents, tape-recorded for later transcription, and lasted typically between thirty-two and ninety minutes, being entirely led by respondents' time constraints.

I approached each interview situation relaxed and informally, in order to allow respondents to feel at ease and to be encouraged to talk at length and in-depth about their work. I constructed my own position as least knowledgeable and least experienced, stating that I intended to listen and learn, and by way of demonstrating interest through positive body language and probes, gave further encouragement.

Since CE might still be negatively conceptualised by many in the United Kingdom at present, due primarily to negative research findings regarding its effectiveness, it was prudent to enter the research context with a commitment to discussing issues of CE in a somewhat discreet manner. I did not want my research participants to be immediately defensive, so I initially posed questions of a general nature, leading to specific questions regarding CE once a good rapport had been established. This was done so as not to unnecessarily negatively affect either the interview situation or the person being interviewed.

None of the respondents showed any reluctance to talk during their interviews. Indeed, all were extremely expansive when engaging in conversations about their work. In some instances, respondents displayed a certain enjoyment in having the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss their experiences to an outsider, which supported Marshall and Rossman's (1999) construction of the nature of elite interviews. At the close of each

interview, I spent time debriefing the respondents, extending appreciation to them for having given up their time to talk to me, and encouraging them to provide feedback on the interview process itself. During this time, many respondents continued to talk about their work. At these times I informed them that I would not use un-recorded information disclosed to me following the interview in the analysis. Communication channels were kept open to allow further questions and possible future discussions or interviews to be made, by either party.

In one particular interviewer/respondent relationship, I experienced a certain sense of identification. At the time of conducting the interview this appeared to be conducive to a good interview, in that we appeared to share understanding. However, I now question whether I was simply enlisted into that individual's persuasive discourse rather then sharing the same understanding. It has also been argued by some that a close identification is not always viewed in a good light (Vincent and Warren, 2001) as it may actually be counter-productive to producing good data. But, as I will show later, this good working relationship allowed me to gain access to that particular LEA and spend time observing the respondent's workplace to gain a material understanding of their work. This observation was essential for phase two of the research (see Section 9.7.2).

7.4 Texts for analysis

I tape-recorded each interview in order to retain a full account of the verbal content and also to allow me to concentrate fully on the conversation, not become distracted by having to take notes. Each interview was transcribed verbatim as soon as possible following the interview (see Appendix VIII). The advantages of tape-recording interviews are manifold (Smith, 1995), but the main disadvantage is the length of time spent on transcription. The eight preliminary interviews totalled six hours of recording time. The nine elite interviews totalled nine hours and twenty-eight minutes. The average time spent in transcribing the data for this research therefore amounted to approximately one hundred and fifty-five hours. However, I believe this time may have actually been much longer, as many respondents talked quickly and at length, sometimes in a jargonistic manner, making transcription difficult.

Although not used in the final analysis (see Section 7.3.3), I also transcribed the eight preliminary interviews accordingly, and it was through reading and comparing these data

that it was decided they might play no part in the overall analysis. Only transcripts of interviews with education administrators formed the basis of the texts for the grounded theory analysis (these may be found in Appendix VIII).

A transcript of an interview interaction is the written equivalent of spoken words. In line with social constructionist philosophy that posits that language is considered neither transparent nor reflective of the material world, rather constitutive of reality (Hall, 1997; Taylor, 2001; Wetherell, 2001), the data for analysis are therefore deemed to have been constructed jointly between the respondents and myself within the interview context.

7.5 Field notes/memos

Field notes and memos are an important aspect of grounded theory procedures which serve a dual purpose (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), first to keep the research grounded and second to hold the awareness of the researcher during the process. I made field notes immediately upon leaving each interview situation in order to preserve my initial impression of both the theoretical content of the interview and the respondents themselves. Such notes included technical comments (problems encountered in data collection, special considerations made by either party), analytical notes (conceptual reflections), and general observations (venue, mood and tone of interview, relationship between myself and the respondent). Data used from these field notes served to complement the grounded theory analysis when used in conjunction with interview data. Field notes/memos may be found in Appendix V.

7.6 Problems encountered

The main problem I encountered during data collection included difficulty in making contact with prospective respondents, supporting Marshall and Rossman (1999) (see Section 7.3.2). For example, on two occasions, education administrators returned a completed informed consent form indicating their agreement to participate in the research, but were then unavailable when I attempted to make arrangements to conduct the interviews. The most frequent replies were that the individuals were in a meeting, on holiday or out of the office. I made no assumptions about this unresponsiveness, however, and proceeded to follow other avenues of enquiry by writing to other prospective participants.

Eighteen months after initial contact with one of these individuals, I was preparing to make one final attempt at contact, when I received a letter stating that if the research was still live, then the officer would now be in a position to participate. Receipt of this letter was a joyous occasion, as the analysis has progressed substantially and the possibility of conducting a further interview afforded me the chance to ask very specific questions pertaining to the developing theory. It transpired during this interview that sheer pressure of work had prevented the individual from participating earlier and I expressed my gratitude for not allowing the matter to slip from the individual's mind.

Problems of access were the only practical difficulties I encountered in the research process (although see Section 7.7), but on a personal level, I experienced others (see Section 7.9).

7.7 The use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)

I approached the research with a view to using the CAQDAS package NUD*IST5 (non-numerical unstructured data: indexing searching theorising - N5) as a tool to aid in storing, retrieving and coding the gathered data. As each transcript became ready, I imported it into N5 for the purpose of coding in line with grounded theory procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

A point of note here is that the use of N5 for coding does not, indeed did not, preclude constantly re-reading the original transcripts and playing back the tape-recorded material. In this manner, by repeatedly hearing respondents' words, their tone and inflection, I was afforded a more in-depth perspective of the data. Switching between selected items of data within N5, transcripts and recordings enabled me to remain immersed in the data and to ensure the analyses remained true to context.

N5 allowed me to microanalyse the transcripts; the line-by-line analysis necessary to generate initial categories, in which I concentrated primarily upon the frequency, extensiveness and intensity of comments. I focused on the frequency of comments (how often the same words, phrases or referents were used) in order to recognise and construct specific themes in respondents' dialogue. The extensiveness of comments refers to the extent to which the frequency of similar comments traversed all or many transcripts, and intensity refers to the strength of feelings characterised by change in voice tone when

respondents talked about specific themes. This form of analysis within N5 enabled the open-coding procedures of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to be accomplished more swiftly than manual procedures would have allowed. This then provided the initial starting point, the baseline, of the analytic process. Axial coding, in which I developed relationships between developing categories and concepts, was subsequently achieved within N5.

Through comparative analysis, comparing one action, object or event with another, those of a similar nature were grouped together. During axial coding, categories increased in theoretical status as I labelled them with more abstract concepts. These concepts represented actions, objects and events that I considered significant to the respondents. This abstraction enables a grounded theory to be transferable across contexts (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this respect, the final theoretical outcome may be transferable to other LEAs throughout the United Kingdom.

However advantageous N5 appears to be within grounded theory studies (Kelle, 1995; Lonkila, 1995; Weitzman and Miles, 1995; Richards and Richards, 2000; Weitzman, 2000), I found it useful only to a certain extent and ultimately abandoned the package at the final stage of theory refinement. For example, N5's ability to reorganise hierarchical coding gave me a sense that my growing theory might never be complete, no matter how sophisticated it appeared. In addition to this, N5's diagrammatic functions are still quite naïve and I could not grasp the full nature of my developing model from such a poor diagram. It was at this time that I reverted back to manual ways of selective coding in order to refine the theory further. It was also imperative that I stand back from the intricacies of the data to gain a broader perspective.

7.8 Limitations of the grounded theory methodology

There have been many criticisms levelled at the grounded theory methodology. Pandit (1996) states that initially working in the dark before the phenomenon becomes salient may be frustrating for some researchers, and that faith and hope coupled with patience and persistence are essential qualities demanded of researchers.

In addition, it may be extremely time-consuming with the sheer volume and complexity of the data, and the switch from being deeply immersed in the data to standing back for a broader perspective may be disorientating (Pandit, 1996).

It has also been argued that fracturing the data into themes and categories might mean that a full understanding of participants' experiences and constructions may be limited or overlooked (Charmaz, 2000).

Bulmer (1979) argued long ago that the 'tabula rasa' view of holding no prior conceptions is open to serious doubt. What of previous experience? It is virtually impossible for a researcher not to hold prior conceptions of what they might find during the research process.

Furthermore, researchers might close their analyses early. Premature commitment to categories means the researcher has not fully explored the issues, events and meanings in the data (Emerson 1983; Katz, 1983).

Importantly, it has been argued that few grounded theory studies are of sufficient length and complexity to warrant the title of a fully-fledged, sophisticated grounded theory (Charmaz, 1995). It is therefore far better for some researchers to state that their study has been guided by grounded theory principles, rather than to claim they have a grounded theory when they do not.

7.9 Critical reflection

This chapter has presented the procedure followed in Phase 1 of the research, culminating in the general limits imposed by a grounded theory methodology. But what of my research? Did this method specifically limit or impede my progress and, if so, how?

Upon reflection, the main problem I experienced was that I initially had doubts about bringing my own experience to bear, and the extent to which I believed it would impact upon data gathering and analysis. I inherently brought my own experiences and value judgements to the research and I wondered whether the findings would reflect these or those of my respondents. This was problematic at first until the social constructionist stance maintained that the findings would necessarily be seen as a co-construction of

events and I resolved to maintain this notion throughout the course of the research – this also helped me to positively view my own involvement.

Also problematic were the doubts I harboured in relation to whether or not the findings from this particular methodology might inform practice. Given that the findings were a joint construction between myself and the data, I was concerned about the extent to which they might be transferable across situations, across LEA's and across respondents, and I resolved, once more, to actively engage in considering the possibility of transferability whilst creating the developing theory. Within a social constructionist paradigm, researchers aim to explore situated patterns within particular cases rather than aiming to produce externally valid generalisations. In this sense, the possibilities for transferability are inherently limited. However, once I observed the possibility for transferability within my own developing theory, it became likely that the possibilities of how practice may be informed could be viewed: an understanding of language, its functions and its usefulness, and of how administrators may construct alternative versions of events would permit possibilities for change.

I was also struck by the thought that I may have closed the analysis early, that I may have missed important data, that other constructions of the theory may have been possible. I struggled with this aspect of the methodology until I finally acknowledged that there is no optimum point at which closure may be reached and that infinite manipulations may be possible. Social constructionist philosophy argues that there is no single reality which one may represent truthfully as there are multiple versions of reality. Therefore, as soon as I was confident that my theory 'hung together', I yielded and allowed closure.

CHAPTER 8
CONSTRUCTING AND MAINTAINING DISABILITY: A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS

8.1 Introduction

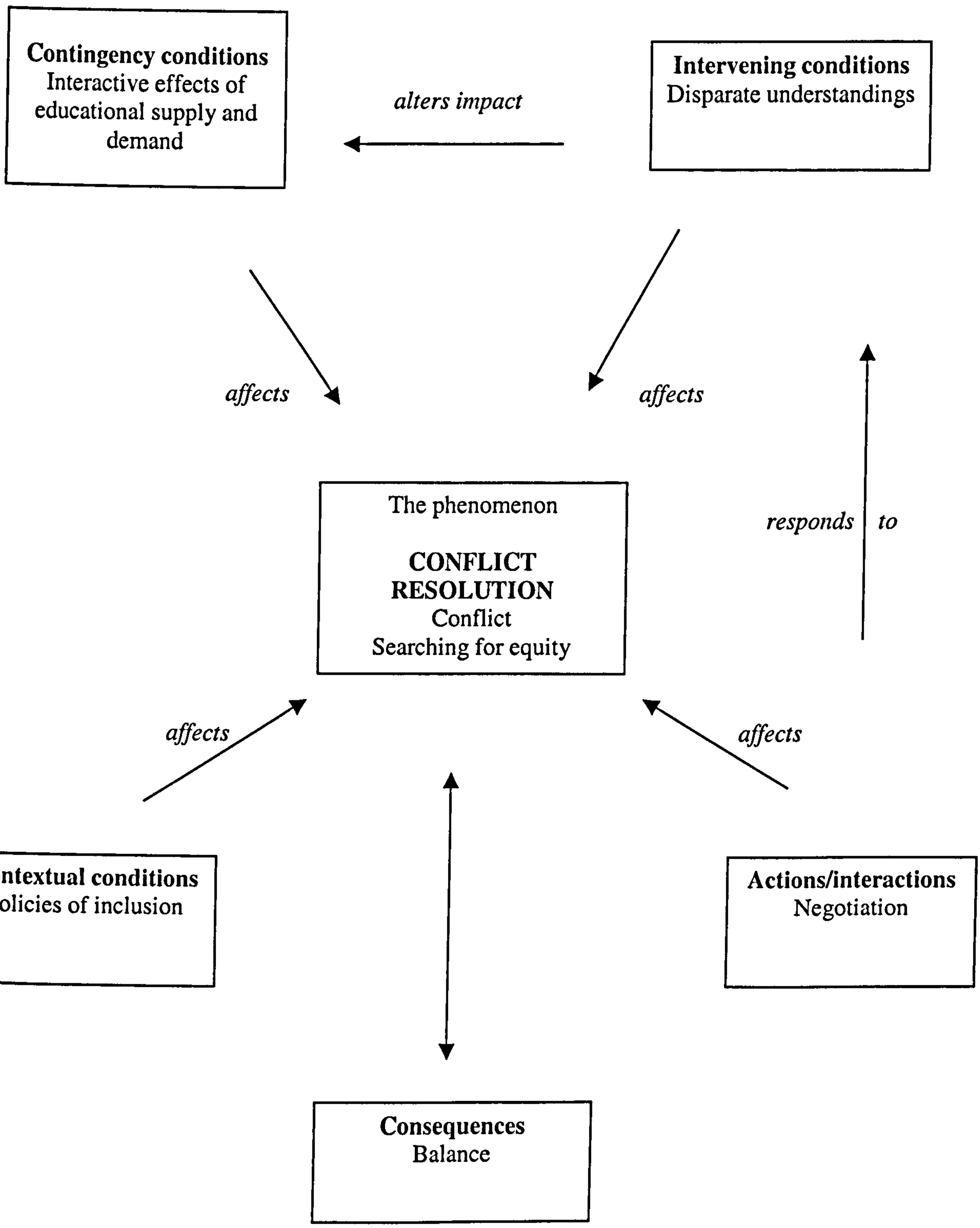
This chapter will lay out the emergent theory following the final stage of the coding procedures of grounded theory methodology, that of selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A grounded theory analysis usually requires a systematic explanation of its structure, as many are substantial and complex with vast interconnected relationships between its sub-categories. For this reason it is necessary to consider first the structure of this chapter.

- Initially, the paradigm of axial coding within grounded theory will be presented in diagrammatic form (Fig 2).
- This diagram will then be complemented by a description of the central story line, which will serve as an explanation of the model and show what is going on in the data from a broad perspective.
- Following the central story line, the identification of the phenomenon, or core category, will be presented.
- Each condition will then be addressed in turn, initially with a tabulated, itemised list of the sub-categories of each condition, followed by its definition and then complemented by an analytical explanation showing its relationship to the phenomenon, or core category.
- These conditions will then be described and supported by quotations taken directly from the texts which serve to illustrate the conditions, as jointly constructed by myself and the respondents.
- A full, critical discussion of each condition will follow, rendering the emerging theory integrated and refined.

One important point to make here is that, in line with a social constructionist perspective, the conditions and sub-categories within the grounded theory have been constructed by my

own interpretations of the data and therefore are presented as one reading of the data. I acknowledge that other readings might equally be made by other researchers.

8.2 Fig 2. Grounded Theory – The Paradigm of Axial Coding: Illustrating the Structure and Process of Conceptual Linkage



Grounded theory attempts to understand actions in a substantive area from the point of view of the actors themselves (Glaser, 1998). This understanding revolves around the behaviour of the participants by which they resolve their main concern. The phenomenon, or core category, which I arrived at therefore represents this continuing 'resolving'. But how exactly did I identify the core category in this instance?

Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate that writing the central story line is one of several techniques that serve both to facilitate the identification of the core category and to aid in the integration of concepts. Other techniques include diagrams and sorting and reviewing theoretical memos. Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to this process as selective coding. Writing the central story line was therefore part of selective coding procedures which served to identify the core category and integrate and refine the developing theory.

The use of N5, it was found in this part of the analytic process, did not easily facilitate selective coding (see Section 7.7). Rather I needed to stand back from the computer-based data and return to the transcripts themselves to form a more general impression of what the data were saying. Questions were asked of the data such as 'what seems to be the main concern of the respondents?', 'why are they doing that?' and 'what strikes me as being salient features of the data?' In this way, a picture of education administrators' working lives and experiences emerged that was identified as being important features of their constructions. In this manner, the core category became salient, that of 'conflict resolution'. By linking the phenomenon with the conditions under which it has been created through writing about their relationships offered an insight to *what* is happening and also *why* it is happening.

The drawing of an explanatory model in the form of a diagram (Fig 2) is part of the axial coding procedures and therefore usually precedes the story line. However, the grounded theory methodology allows researchers to analyse data in a non-linear fashion, through sometimes overlapping one coding procedure with another (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this instance, the drawing of an explanatory diagram and the writing of the central story line occurred concurrently; as one developed, so too did the other. The framework that best illustrates the relational links between the core category and its conditions is displayed in Fig 2. Here, the descriptive story of what is going on in the data – the story line - is

explained, but should be read in conjunction with Fig 2. The summary is briefly described in Section 8.4.

8.3 Central story line

LEAs have been located and developed to provide for the needs of the country's young population in terms of their education. Of particular importance is the education of the small percentage of the child population considered to have SEN. This is especially relevant when the presence of a motor disorder sometimes has a significant impact upon the educational needs of a child. This area of the authority's work (SEN administration) is contingent upon many problematic issues. Also problematic is that the world of education might now be viewed as a consumer market. Within the contemporary market-force approach to education, many parents expect the best for their children in terms of education, and some therefore actively strive to achieve the best, when sometimes this is contrary to what LEAs can offer when resources are limited. As a result of market forces, and because administrators are very much aware of ever-changing statutes and guidance and how their work is under continual assessment, the need for them to justify decisions in terms of performance indicators, league tables, SEN tribunal appeal rates, and so on, comes to the fore.

Additionally, territoriality (competitive neighbouring authorities in terms of the availability of resources and requests for placements outside state provision) and finite budgets are all viewed as sites of potential conflict which have to be somehow resolved. As a result, the extent to which local authorities strive to place children within their own geographical boundaries sometimes becomes an issue. This may happen, for example, when parents of children residing in one authority request a school placement within another authority due to lack of discernible appropriate (or adequate) resources within their own locality. When this happens (and it apparently often does, given the level of resources in some authorities), the possibility exists for certain schools to become oversubscribed, causing planning difficulties for education administrators. The SEN tribunal, which has been created to negotiate settlements between aggrieved parties, sometimes causes tensions when these out of borough placements are upheld following an appeal from the authority concerned.

LEAs are operating within extremely difficult contexts in terms of inclusive policies and practices; local movements in terms of co-location of special schools; and alternative school settings within and outside state management. This means that LEAs are under increasing pressure to conform to contemporary inclusion policies enveloped within recent legislation. Even though some parents may specifically request a particular independent specialist school which they believe to be the right setting for their child, but which also may not be centrally funded, administrators have a legislative duty to pursue avenues indicative of inclusive policies. Therefore, rhetoric and practices of educational inclusion are seen to add contextual conflict to administrators' work.

Parental involvement in the statementing process provides a potential source of conflict which has to be managed. This relates to and strongly alters the ways in which the effects mentioned above impact upon administrators' practices. For example, parental knowledge of and involvement in the educational process (statementing and school choice) brings forth many problematic issues for administrators. For instance, some parents of children with motor disorders specifically request a school setting which falls outside state management (for example NICE), which entails a lengthier, problematic statementing process. Disparate understandings of CE between parents and administrators are evidenced which, again, causes conflict.

Administrators therefore constructed a degree of conflict in their work, at various levels, which is seen to stem, mostly, from the issues mentioned above. However, conflict may be seen in one main form, that of trying to reconcile statutory obligations and funding constraints with meeting the needs of parents in terms of preferences for particular schools.

How education administrators reconcile the conflict they face on a daily basis is one area of concern, and is evidenced in the actions and interactions that were articulated. Many instances were recounted of administrators negotiating with parents, and continually accommodating and making readjustments, particularly over matters concerning appropriate school choice. If the preferred school falls outside state management, or if the school is deemed in any way inappropriate by education administrators, then they would typically begin negotiations with parents in order for both parties to try and find a way forward. However, what became apparent within the data is that this way forward

sometimes consists of the administrators' tacit and pragmatic view of what such a way forward should mean (what school places are available, what funding is readily available).

In an attempt to resolve conflicts, education administrators make decisions on behalf of parents of children with motor disorders in an equitable manner which, in effect, means treating these children the same as other children with SEN. In addition, it was found within the data that by sometimes considering children under the rubric of SEN the same as children without SEN, feelings of conflict may be neutralised. This was viewed as another form of conflict resolution. All disabled children's needs are different, yet attempts are often made to treat them all the same, and decisions are made by judging an individual child with other similar cases in order to provide the same level of resources.

The consequences of administrators' conflict resolution are varied, but the overall construction of these consequences is that administrators strive to reach a balance, in the sense of either achieving a transparency of process accessible to all, or reaching a state of psychological equilibrium. Alternatively, finding a balance may be constructed as actually procuring equity for all children. One particular consequence is that, for parents of children with motor disorders, choice of CE (or, for that matter, any other specialist education that falls outside state provision) may potentially be denied.

8.4 Summary

The central story line has provided a description of how education administrators articulate and construct their experiences of SEN administration within LEAs. So how does the central story line, constructed within the selective coding procedures of grounded theory, theoretically link with the paradigm of axial coding (Fig 2)?

The paradigm of axial coding (Fig 2) illustrates the final stage of the many coding procedures within grounded theory. The phenomenon identified as being salient to respondents is shown in relation to contingency, contextual, intervening, actions/interactions and consequential conditions. The summary which best portrays this paradigm theoretically is as follows:

*From **contingency conditions** of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, and within the **context** of contemporary rhetoric and practice of inclusion, education*

administrators construct their work in terms of conflict. ***Intervening conditions*** *of disparate understandings of CE alters the impact of these contingency conditions and thus affect the level of conflict experienced by administrators. In response to these intervening conditions, administrators* ***act and interact*** *by negotiation as a way to resolve conflict (the core category). The* ***consequence*** *of all these interacting conditions is that administrators search for equity in order to find a balance, which, in turn, enables parental choice to be met or denied.*

It must be noted that this is a *descriptive* story of what is going on in the data. However, a critical evaluation of the data moves this description to a *critical analysis,* so this descriptive story line and summary should be compared with the critical analysis (see Section 8.17) presented at the end of Chapter 8.

Essentially, it is important to identify, define and explain each condition from which the core category of conflict resolution has been constructed. Each condition within the paradigm of axial coding will be considered in turn with regard to its conceptualised nature, together with a detailed analysis as to its inclusion within the theoretical model. It is also important to note that each separate sub-category within each condition has not been strictly constructed and confined within that condition. Rather many crosscutting relationships have been identified illustrating complex areas of concern for educational administrators, but it is only through attempting to retain some form of structure that clarity of reporting may be maintained.

This basically means that a sub-category subsumed under one condition may also be subsumed under another condition, which makes problematic the original conceptualisation within the process of axial coding. It is hoped that these complex relationships will become clear as the chapter progresses. Prior to considering each condition, the core category constructed as being the most salient issue found within the data needs to be defined. Here the grounded theory truly begins.

8.5 The core category: Conflict resolution

Table 1

CONFLICT RESOLUTION – sub-categories
Conflict
Searching for equity

Table 1 above displays the sub-categories of the core category of conflict resolution.

The core category is defined as what is significant to the respondents and explains what is going on in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The various coding procedures of grounded theory methodology enabled the construction of the core category of 'conflict resolution', as the data showed many instances whereby education administrators constructed sites of conflict and ways in which these were minimised or controlled. The analytical construction of conflict resolution is explained as, *conflict resolution occurs when sites of conflict experienced by education administrators are neutralised by searching for equity.*

In referring to the paradigm of axial coding (Fig 2), it may be noted that the core category is born out of both the contingency conditions and actions/interactions. In other words, conflict and searching for equity are central to the core category of conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution is defined as an action taken to retaliate against, resolve or neutralise something that is viewed as a potential site of tension, threat or danger, and education administrators are engaging in conflict resolution in their work to a large extent. Respondents frequently spoke of attempting to deal with all children in as fair a way as possible and search for equity (fairness) in many aspects of their work. In most cases, this is achieved by comparing a decision for a particular child at a particular point in time with previous decisions made for children in similar circumstances and with similar difficulties. In so doing, in the belief that they are working towards the good of all children, they are engaging in an action which helps to alleviate many sites of potential conflict they face on a daily basis.

It is important to be as succinct as possible for ease of reporting such complex conditions. Therefore, because conflict is multi-dimensional and is also a sub-category of contingency conditions, explanation of this concept shall be made under the relevant subheading. Moreover, searching for equity is also subsumed under the condition of actions/interactions and so shall be explained under that subheading. It is now possible to see that clear relational links may be evidenced between one condition and another, which are illustrated by the constructions of education administrators. The analysis now moves on to illustrate the contingency conditions which give rise to the core category.

8.6 Contingency conditions – interactive effects of educational supply and demand

Table 2

INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPLY AND DEMAND – sub-categories
Childhood disability and education
Educational consumerism
Territoriality
Conflict
• Funding constraints
• Unheard recommendations
• Emotionality
• Idealism versus realism

Table 2 above displays the sub-categories of contingency conditions, constructed as the interactive effects of educational supply and demand.

Contingency conditions represent a set of background events that have influence over the phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), conceptualised and constructed here as the interactive effects of educational supply and demand. The analytical construction of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand is explained as follows, *LEAs are in place to provide (supply) for the needs of the country's child population in terms of its*

educational welfare. Of particular importance is the educational welfare of the small percentage of the child population that is considered to have SEN. This notion holds that LEAs must provide (supply) the most appropriate education according to the educational needs of the children within its catchment area (demand) and also according to the preferences (demands) expressed by parents, given the contemporary rhetoric of parental choice.

How education administrators reconcile these differences and conflicts is the substance of this research, and suggestions were offered by participants for measures undertaken in order for them to reach a manageable state of affairs. Each of the sub-categories of contingency conditions will now be explained, with examples from the text serving to illustrate each sub-category.

8.6.1 Childhood disability and education

The analytical construction of childhood disability and education is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, the presence of a physical disability sometimes has a significant impact upon the educational needs of a child.*

In the United Kingdom, LEAs are expected to 'place the highest priority on their statutory duty to promote high standards of education for all children, including those with SEN' (DES, 2001:9). That some children have physical disabilities complicates this notion of high standards of education for all as levels of resources for children with physical disabilities vary from one area of the country to another, yet the same standards appear to apply to all children, evidenced in governmental policies and guidelines such as the COP (DES, 2001).

Therefore, childhood disability and education interact to cause problems in decision-making processes for education administrators, as children with such difficulties have to undergo a lengthy statementing process in order to receive the educational placement or resources by which their needs may be met. This fundamental statutory process illustrates one eventuality from which the core category of 'conflict resolution' occurs.

For administrators working specifically in the area of SEN within LEAs, interactive effects would of necessity begin with the fundamental assumption that (alongside effective interventions from the health service) appropriate education is crucial in moderating the effects of childhood disability. It is the duty of LEAs to provide for the educational welfare of children with motor disorders in terms of the statementing process: a child's initial assessment, drawing up a statement of SEN and providing an educational setting or additional resources appropriate to the child's needs. But what, according to education administrators, are the specific features which serve to complicate education for children with a disability?

> *'I think it's actually knowing what impact it will have in the first place...it's more difficult to know what problems that child will perceive than one that has learning difficulties'* (LEA8, 565-574).

The knowledge base of education administrators comes into question here (see Section 8.10.3). Education administrators might not have access to certain types of knowledge, for instance the experience of caring for a disabled child or the experience of disability itself and the problems that might be experienced. For instance, many respondents referred to physical access to schools as one critical factor, constructing the complications in managing access to mainstream buildings for children with physical disabilities,

> *'with a child with physical disabilities, quite often accessing the school itself, i.e., accessibility issues and mobility issues...it's difficult to know how it will also impact upon them'* (LEA8, 587-590).

> *'(our) LEA has been working very hard to increase access for children with physical disabilities within our mainstream schools. So we've had a whole access programme, we've had funding from the Government, all LEAs have had funding for access initiatives, to try and ensure that all schools have minimum standards, that they've got ramps at least to get into main rooms'* (LEA9, 234-238),

> *'you are required to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate physically disabled special needs children'* (LEA3, 830-831).

These findings would appear to support the notion that education administrators are now working within the social model of disability, by recognising that the school environment

must change in order to appropriately accommodate children with motor disorders and physical impairments. In this respect, as Oliver (1996) argued that the cause of the problem (disability) is society's failure to provide appropriate services for individuals with impairments within its social organisation, this now appears to be happening, at least from an educational and schooling perspective, in that social/environmental barriers for individuals with physical disabilities are being addressed. Equally, it could be argued that administrators are buying into the contemporary language of policies of physical inclusion to the detriment of other domains of inclusive practices.

Usually added to these comments were quite lengthy explanations as to how cost effective and disruptive this would actually mean in real terms,

> *'expecting a comprehensive school that's on four floors, say, or three floors, that's a sprawling site, to re-jig all its exits and entrances to install a lift, or even a stair-lift given the number of staircases there are in some schools, you know, you're not talking about one five or six thousand pound stair-lift, you're talking about ten. So you're getting into five figure sums and sometimes six figure sums, so you can't say that's reasonable adjustment. So in secondary school, it's more difficult to support children with physical disability if they have major mobility problems'* (LEA3, 831-837).

The implication here was that secondary schools are usually multi-level buildings and to install lifts in every secondary school would not be cost effective. However, some respondents argued that it is not purely a matter of physical access to schools that should be a priority, suggesting that how a physical disability impacts upon a child's progress in other domains is equally important,

> *'it's difficult with children with physical disabilities, because it's not necessarily just the physical side, it's also how that impacts on their learning abilities'* (LEA8, 319-320),

> *'I think very often the physical disability masks, you know, what the child is actually capable of doing'* (LEA4, 316-317),

> *'it may be a physical disability that may not affect them academically but it certainly will when it comes to socialising, it certainly will when it comes to accessing the curriculum, it certainly will when it comes to moving around the school, and how that child perceives themselves in the classroom situation'* (LEA8, 565-569).

So, from the perspective of education administrators, the major stumbling block and effect of a child having a physical disability in an inclusive sense, would appear to be the issue of physical access to schools. Minimum mention was made to other domains (social and psychological) that might be affected by such a disability, although it was evidenced to some degree. Overall, there is a minimum awareness of what having a physical disability entails. Moreover, in referring to mainstream schools and the integration of children with SEN into such, respondents appear to sustain notions of disability by problematising issues of access. In this way, discourses of difference are accentuated and the child remains pathologised.

8.6.2 Educational Consumerism

The analytical construction of educational consumerism is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, SEN administration is now dominated by problematic issues as the field of education in the United Kingdom is now viewed as a consumer market.*

The world of education in the United Kingdom might now be constructed as a consumer market. Indeed, recent literature on educational research often refers to parents as critical consumers of services (Appleton and Minchom, 1991), and data from this research supports this notion. Ideally, the effect of this would be that children with SEN such as motor disorders would be granted a place in the most appropriate school setting to suit the wishes of both them and their parents - the consumers. The opposite effect of this would be withholding or denying such resources.

Data from this study supports the notion of a market force approach to education, as evidenced in the choice of words selected by administrators to describe and construct parents, as in the following quotations,

> *'.....you've got to make the best in mainstream so that it becomes a consumer choice, rather than consumer in terms of parents opting for special education'* (LEA7, 676-678),

> *'we're active and we visit clients'* (LEA6, 17-18),

> *'we were forced into being quite personal, if you want to call it that, with our clients, you know, we were face-to-face with them quite often'* (LEA3, 288-290).

There are two issues here. The first quotation clearly makes a link between a consumer market and inclusion, by the respondent showing that in order for parents to opt into inclusion, then mainstream schools must be able to demonstrate they have the best resources available to all children. The notion of consumerism is illustrated in the choice of adjective to construct parents as 'consumers', the respondent implicitly being positioned as a salesman of consumer products.

Secondly, the selection of the adjective 'client' implicitly positions education administrators as professionals within a client/professional relationship. From this second perspective, parents would appear to gain access to knowledge from a more privileged expertise and authority, which is interpreted as issues of power relationships. These power relationships may, however, be evidenced in differentiated contexts. In other words, parents who are middle-class, more articulate and who have the knowledge and means to moderate power within the client/professional relationship would typically gain access to more information than parents of lesser means. There are therefore relational and propositional links between contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand in terms of educational consumerism, and intervening condition of parental involvement in the statementing process (see Section 8.10.1).

Moreover, there is a hidden assumption that administrators would prefer to work with parents from a distance by the use of 'we were forced'. Instead of being equal partners in the statementing process, administrators seek to maintain a power imbalance. This has huge implications, which will be addressed in Chapter ten.

8.6.3 Territoriality

The analytical construction of territoriality is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, competitive neighbouring LEAs provide a potential source of conflict for education administrators, in terms of the availability of resources, requests for placements outside state provision, and also families' movement between authorities.*

The interactive effects of educational supply and demand include territoriality, which respondents construct between neighbouring LEAs. This is particularly so in instances where one authority may not have sufficient resources or appropriately modified or adapted schools for children with physical or motor disorders. Essentially, the position of NICE being located within Birmingham LEA proves problematic for those parents living outside the authority requesting a placement there for their child. Such territoriality was evidenced in the data. For example, all respondents spoke of the need to make correct educational provision for children within their own authority, the following excerpt summarising the sentiments of many,

> *'...if we can make that provision, the correct provision, in Borough, then why should we send a child somewhere else?'* (LEA1, 417-418).

There is a notion of isolation, insulation and seclusion within LEAs, with education administrators not wishing to place children outside their territory. Educational planning is also seen as a problem. Respondents constructed difficulty in planning for future needs and provision within their locality when movement into the authority's boundary or catchment area by families actively seeking what they perceive to be the right school, and thereby perceiving they are enacting choice, sometimes causes widespread disruption of services.

> *'We have situations here where one of our big problems is movement into the city, and you can't plan for that, hundred children with statements of special need have moved into the city...but that's been a major problem, people moving into the borough and taking up school places'* (LEA3, 340-359),

> *'...if parents from other authorities go to tribunal, demand, or put as one of their conditions, that they want one of [our] schools, I could find that I've got no facility to plan because the tribunal is taking that away from me'* (LEA4, 108-110).

Yet in any organisational planning, future trends in population can usually be incorporated into the organisation's strategies. Therefore when respondents showed concern about their inability to plan for the future, this may be constructed as the authority being insular and isolated. Not only does such population movement appear to cause disruption of future service planning, but it also has serious effects on the provision available to the children

whose needs must now be met within the new authority in terms of the child's statement of SEN,

> *'we have to adopt the statement and treat it as though we'd made the statement on the day their previous authority did'* (LEA3, 364-365).

Such instances of statement adoption have the potential to generate difficulties for the receiving authority. For example, the level of resources the child requires might be over and above those deemed necessary, or available, by the receiving authority, and vice versa. One problem associated with parents of children with motor disorders requesting a placement for their child at NICE is that parents who do not reside within Birmingham's authority might have even more difficulty than other parents who perhaps do live in the area. One respondent spoke directly of this problem,

> *'I mean with conductive education now, whereas parents did go to tribunal and win, and get a place at the Institute, I don't believe they would now because [our authority] is offering conductive education within the LEA. So I'm sure, you know, that would be unreasonable to suggest they would have to go out of county'* (LEA6, 672-675).

But, again, this clearly shows how knowledge of CE is limited, as a complete CE programe is not offered within that authority, but a version of conductive practices. There are also issues of transportation within 'territoriality', which serve to affect parental choice of school,

> *'we also have a policy which causes parents concerns, in that if (school) A and B are both appropriate and in fact are the same in terms of placement costs, the LEA will only fund transport to the nearest appropriate school'* (LEA9, 100-102).

This would appear to contest the notion of parental choice and quite clearly would benefit those families who are more financially capable of transporting their child to the school farthest away if that is what they wish. In this way, some parents' express preference is quashed and they remain oppressed by a discourse of financial appropriateness.

Conflict also arises in terms of the different policies and practices of neighbouring LEAs. For example, one LEA may quite explicitly contradict the practices of another, as in the following extracts,

'we've had children move into the city and their statements have said something that we've looked at and thought, 'we wouldn't do it like that in [our authority]'', (LEA3, 405-407), and,

'we have children who've come in from outside the city who've been in special schools, that we've felt ought to be in resource bases. We've had children who we think we can support in their own school that some local authorities haven't' (LEA3, 470-473).

So clearly, decisions made on education resources would appear to be random. What of policies and practices? Policies might be interpreted as a set of value judgements rather than an attempt to deal equitably with all children. Alternatively, the amount and level of resources in each authority may give rise to different opinions as to what is or is not appropriate provision. Yet administrators still have to make decisions pertaining to policy, thereby causing some degree of conflict over the necessary decision to make provision for a given child at a given point in time.

8.6.4 Conflict

The analytical construction of conflict is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, education administrators experience external and internal (professional and psychological) conflict from many aspects of their work.*

Conflict is inherent in many aspects of local authority work, particularly in the area of SEN in which administrators must deal with many situations that might have no precedent as each child's educational needs are fundamentally different from one another. In this respect, because of the multi-faceted nature of conflict, the various forms of conflict that may be experienced by education administrators could, in effect, be a central feature of each condition of the growing theory. For example, conflict may be a sub-category of contingency conditions in that conflict causes education administrators to negotiate in order to reconcile conflict, thereby also becoming a feature of the actions/interactions condition. Additionally, conflict may be a result of parental involvement in the statementing process and disparate understandings of educational programmes, and so might be subsumed under intervening conditions. Moreover, conflict may also arise from contextual conditions of inclusion, again resulting in actions of negotiation, so conflict may

be features residing in contextual and actions/interactions conditions. Importantly, conflict may also be a subcategory of consequential conditions.

It is very clear from this that conflict is constructed as a complicated area of concern in SEN administration, and it was therefore highly problematic to position the concept within the overall scheme or paradigm of grounded theory. For the purpose of clarity, I have constructed conflict as a major sub-category of contingency conditions and also as a major component of the phenomenon under discussion, conflict resolution, although it may indeed be positioned anywhere within the model (see Fig 2).

Conflict may be defined in two ways. Firstly conflict is defined as being in a state of opposition, a disagreement, an interference, a fight or struggle, an inconsistency or a clashing of opposing principles. All respondents spoke of the notion of conflict, or potential sites of conflict, that occur in varying degrees within their professional duties.

Secondly, conflict may be defined as being in a state of distress that results from the aforementioned sites of conflict; the opposition of incompatible wishes or needs in a person. Therefore conflict is born out of conflict: to experience external conflict may result in being in internal (psychological) conflict. There appears to be many potential sites of conflict for administrators resulting in uncertainty or internal conflict. The feelings that administrators experience as a result of such tensions may therefore be described as internal conflict, or a state of disequilibrium or disquiet.

Conflict is seen to originate from various quarters and is explained in terms of funding constraints, unheard recommendations, emotionality and idealism versus realism.

Conflicts come in the form of tensions between the demands of legislation and parental involvement (contingency and intervening conditions), logistics of the number of possible school placements set against level of demand, the specific needs of a child and the resources available (or not) to meet those needs, and defending the statement of need in terms of a thorough assessment process, resources available and defending against higher order performance indicators. Working relationships between administrators and between authorities are other possible sites of tension, whereby it is always possible that one party

may disagree with another in the choices and decisions they make. For the purpose of clarity, these potential sites of tension will be addressed in turn.

8.6.4.1 Funding constraints

The analytical construction of funding constraints is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, funding constraints are a site of potential conflict within SEN administration.*

Respondents constructed the experience of constraints related to funding, which are closely and intimately connected with the work in which they are involved. Indeed, the complete set of data was punctuated with comments about financial obligations and constraints, all too frequent to be illustrated here in their entirety. Suffice to provide succinct exemplars in this analysis. For example, there were many instances in which respondents spoke of funding constraints leading to impasse. One respondent particularly spoke of the conflict experienced through the authority's,

> *'...inability to move on things, because we've got our constraints, money is the biggest constraint'* (LEA1, 113-114).

Inability to move on things due to financial constraints may cause the statutory assessment process to persist sometimes at great length, even though the process should be time limited (DES, 2001). There was also a notion of competition between LEAs and schools as far as budget spending is concerned,

> *'we don't spend more money than they [schools] do, in fact we have less money than they do, so for them not to spend theirs and for me to spend mine... so that's a conflict as well, and we're not supposed to challenge them too much'* (LEA1, 144-146).

Implicit within these quotations is the notion that administrators identify with the authority somewhat. In the selection of words 'for me to spend mine' and 'I'm', these respondents assume the authority's budget to be one's own. There is a certain allegiance to the authority served. But that allegiance might be misplaced because administrators themselves are always under the watchful command of a higher order within the authority. *'We're not supposed to challenge them too much'* serves to illustrate the respondent's position as subservient to central Government control.

Funding with regard to local management of schools (devolution of funding) currently features a large part in causing potential sites of conflict for administrators.

> *'There are some conflicts, especially at the moment. We're undergoing changes in the structuring of how funding is being delivered to children, and I'm very keen for the children to have what they need in schools, and at times we do have budget constraints'* (LEA6, 158-160),

> *'Q: So the conflict is what you actually want to do for the children and the constraints that are put on you by the LEA, which in turn comes from higher up the ladder doesn't it, in terms of Government?*
> *A: Yes. Yes. It does, yes. As I say, there's a lot of restructuring going on with regard to funding. I think it's probably at the worst phase at the moment, and when all the information has come in and the decisions have been made, hopefully things will improve. At the moment we're very much in a state of flux and nobody really knows, you know, what's happening'* (LEA6, 168-176).

Finance is another source of conflict in that administrators sometimes have to negotiate between what is available and what parents are requesting in terms of educational resources or indeed school placement. Again, this would imply a prepositional relationship between contingency conditions (childhood disability and educational resources) and actions/interactions (negotiation). For example, some parents might prefer their child to be enrolled on a programme of CE in a specialist environment, but this would incur a heavier than normal financial burden upon the LEA. When asked about specialist provision, respondents always constructed a degree of concern over whether the placement would be suitable, but additionally concern over the 'efficient use of resources', as in the following example,

> *'you'd only place a child if it is appropriate to the child's needs first and foremost, it has to be compatible with the efficient education of the other children, and crucially, and this is a big one, for parents as well I suppose, it has to be compatible with the efficient use of resources'* (LEA9, 91-94).

The efficient use of resources is fundamentally one main problematic area constructed by education administrators as the phrase is laid down in Schedule 27 of the Education Act of 1996. *'LEA's must comply with a parental preference unless the school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEN, or the placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child would be educated, or with*

the efficient use of resources' (DES, 2001:107). This therefore posits a legal obligation for administrators to observe its rule. Education administrators usually rely on and refer to this term and its implications when making difficult decisions as to school placement,

> *'if I've got a choice between school A and B and both could meet the child's needs appropriately, and the cost of A is £10,000 a year and the cost of B is £2,000 a year, I would always go for B because that is my legal duty to use the efficiency of the resources adequately'* (LEA9, 94-97).

When speaking particularly about NICE, one respondent quite explicitly stated that the cost of such a placement would inhibit a child being placed there, showing how the preference of some parents for CE for their child would typically be denied,

> *'well, you're back again to efficient use of resources. If it costs a full-time place at NICE maybe £20,000, well in order to get the child in a special school or resource base in the city maybe only costs me £10,000, now if I'm convinced that the £10,000 place is appropriate, it's crucial, it has to be appropriate to the child's needs, then I'm not going to fund the £20,000 place'* (LEA9, 289-293).

Again, the respondent takes on responsibility of the authority's budget in the choice of *'only costs me'* and *'I'm not going to fund'*.

Yet finance is just one factor in denying placements at the Institute and this particular respondent offered a suggestion as to how parents might manage to have their preference met,

> *'if they've been to a tribunal and they've asked for A which is what they want but I'm asking for B which is what I want, obviously if the parents can convince the tribunal that B in some way is inappropriate for their child, or that my analysis of the costs of A are wrong, then they are likely to win their case'* (LEA9, 145-149).

Notably, from this extract, parents would have to have appealed to the SEN tribunal in order to 'win their case', implicitly suggesting that their initial request for a placement at the Institute would have been denied. But parents should note that they would of necessity have to do much work in convincing the tribunal that the school offered by the LEA was inappropriate for their child and also that the costs had been analysed incorrectly by the authority. This would presumably take up much time and effort and, in practical terms, might prove to be extremely difficult and time-consuming. Clearly, some parents would be

disadvantaged by this process, and in this respect, parents may be oppressed by the discursive practices operating within the SEN system.

8.6.4.2 Unheard recommendations

The analytical construction of unheard recommendations is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, some administrators experience stress or frustration in that their recommendations sometimes go unheard.*

At times, much stress is experienced by some administrators who recommend a certain course of action during the assessment stage of statementing, only to find their recommendations have been disregarded for one reason or another. This aspect of internal conflict was articulated by at least one respondent who stated that,

> *'I sort of recommend things and they're not actually happening, and I understand why, because the LEA, you know, is short of money, but sometimes I feel we could do better than we actually are, and it is all down to money, as it is with so many things these days. So yes, that's the main conflict I think'* (LEA6, 160-164).

For this respondent, the main source of conflict was constructed as frustration because LEAs do not have sufficient funds by which to enact recommendations put forward by assessment officers. However, the respondent appears to be resigned to this state of affairs, articulating a degree of understanding as far as finance is concerned. Here, there are questions regarding the monitoring of statemented provision, and this would appear to call into question the whole assessment process. The fundamental reason behind assessments is to elicit the level of resources that a child might need in order to overcome some learning difficulty or disability, and the fundamental reason behind the statement is to direct schools to implement the particular resources required. If, following assessment, an assessor's recommendations are not heard or disregarded, then the statement itself may not display the correct level of resources required by the child, and the LEA would be failing in its statutory duty. Decisions to disregard certain recommendations are seen to further pathologise the child and result in perpetuating the disability, as the child may subsequently not receive intervention that might have alleviated the disability.

8.6.4.3 Emotionality

The analytical construction of emotionality is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, administrators may become emotionally involved in their work, as they may feel the emotional effects of sometimes distressing cases.*

Some respondents constructed an emotional side to their work, and it seemed important to these individuals that they do not lose sight of this. In this respect, the assumption was that the fundamental nature of working with and for children with SEN is that the child's educational needs should be treated as a priority, yet this is not always the case. Parents often express emotions and feelings to administrators (sometimes quite forceful and out of character) and since administrators might have contact with parents regularly, it is very important for these administrators not to lose sight of the real issue - the child. This is not always possible, however, in today's age of legislation and litigation. Administrators stated that their emotions are sometimes tested on a daily basis when working with parents of children whose educational needs are different, or special, compared with most children.

> *'Q: Is [your job] rewarding for you?*
> *A: It's emotionally draining. It is rewarding...but...it can become very exhausting'* (LEA2, 332-338),

> *'we're all human at the end of the day, and I think that sometimes we get bogged down in our jobs that we forget that we're dealing with human people with feelings and we forget what it's like'* (LEA2, 108-110),

> *'we do it for the best of motives and you can see the kind of human side of that, it's very difficult to avoid it'* (LEA5, 758-759),

The emotional aspects of dealing with parents of children with complex and sometimes terminal medical conditions can often have an impact upon administrators,

> *'so there are lots of conflicts that can crop up, you know, as a result of these kind of pressures and these intense emotions that are sometimes generated when you are working with families who have had a raw deal, who have a child who has a very profound, complex, worrying condition, that might even mean that their life expectancy is low'* (LEA5, 777-781).

Conversely, at times during the interviews, some respondents overtly spoke of being distanced from the children, either as a direct result of the nature of the work they do by working at a physical distance from the children they serve, or being distant on an emotional level,

> *'I don't spend as much time with individual children as I would like, so I don't really get the chance to build up close relationships'* (LEA6, 139-141),

> *'people sit in offices and make decisions and don't have actual contact with schools and children'* (LEA6, 288-289),

> *'the team I have now are administrators. So, if you like, few of us actually meet the children at all. What you're dealing with are the professionals, the doctors, the psychologists, the teachers, who are the ones that actually work with the child and are giving us advice. So for most staff, the reality is that they're never directly involved really in any emotional way with the child'* (LEA9, 374-378).

The possibility exists that education administrators might actually choose to retreat behind the barricades, as it were, and remain at a distance from parents and children in order to preserve some sense of professional distance. Again, this might be constructed as an act of conflict resolution against the potential psychological threat that might result from becoming too involved in their cases. So, again, there is a direct relational link between contingency conditions and the phenomenon. This construct of distance leads to the question of the child's visibility in the process of assessment and statementing. The following excerpt clearly illustrates the invisibility of the child, from the point of view of the SEN tribunal panel in decision-making,

> *'Q: And there's a panel of people there who don't really look at the child, they're looking at how well each side argues its case?*
> *A: Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think sometimes it is forgotten that there's a child at the end of it. That does concern me'* (LEA6, 493-497).

This might appear to have been a leading question. However, to contextualise this, the preceding discussion had positioned the SEN tribunal within a discourse of law ('a legal process', 'like being in court', 'the chair has a legal background', 'I was in the witness box', and so on), therefore this particular exchange had been co-constructed by both the respondent and myself during the previous discussion. Here, we shared an understanding

that the child was caught up in a legal process which rendered the child invisible. The subsequent discussion alluded to the child being caught up in battle between parents and professionals resulting in negative feedback, low self-esteem and powerless within this matrix of power.

There is a clear detachment from the child by individuals participating in decision-making panels of SEN tribunals. This would suggest that the emotional aspects of decision-makers' work might be too problematic or stressful if they were to become closely involved with the children and parents. Keeping a professional distance is one way of neutralising this threat. But, by doing so, they are ignoring the fundamental issue of actively seeking the educational and psychological growth of children that might need specialist education and support. Contrast this with the following statement,

> *'I meet a lot of children and strangely enough I do remember their names. It's quite obviously where my interest lies'* (LEA6, 136-137).

8.6.4.4 Idealism versus realism

The analytical construction of idealism versus realism is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, administrators are in conflict between what would be an ideal school setting for a child and the reality of available resources.*

Conflict of interest may arise between parental expectations and what is available in terms of educational resources, or what one administrator would like to happen versus what is practicable, constructed here as idealism versus realism,

> *'educational psychologists have a perspective about what's available within the authority, so they aren't necessarily writing a report or giving their advice based upon what the child's needs are, but based upon what's available'* (LEA2, 217-219),

> *'... a lot of it depends on what you've got available in terms of provision, a lot of it depends on what the parent's expectation is'* (LEA3, 399-400),

> *'there is always conflict between what one would ideally want for the child that I'm working with and on the other hand the awareness of what the realities are, and*

> *what tough decisions officers like (officer's name) have to make when he's [sic] got a finite budget'* (LEA5, 295-298).

Here there is a clear relational link between the intervening condition of disparate understandings (in terms of parental expectations) and the contingency condition of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand (in terms of funding constraints). Parents' expectations regarding the education of their child and the responsibility of LEAs to take into account the most effective use of resources presents a clear area of tension, both for parents and administrators. Added to this is the parental perception that pursuit of their child's welfare is upheld by law and that the LEA's responsibility in terms of writing a statement is legally binding.

One respondent in particular argued that the most over-riding source of conflict is in the present statutory statementing process in trying to meet the present needs of the child whilst the whole process itself counteracts this in its lengthy process,

> *'the greatest conflict one has with statutory assessment is it's not the right mechanism to address children's needs. If you consider, when a school for instance is putting forward a child for statutory assessment, or a parent, they've usually got to the point where they actually believe the child's not making adequate progress, and they're beginning to think, well we've been doing school action plus or whatever it is for a long time and it's not working. And then along comes statutory assessment which takes 6 months, so there's inevitably a gap of 6 months as a minimum, after all the law is 26 weeks to carry out the assessment and statementing process. So you've got already a conflict in terms of we're here to address children's needs and yet you're about to put in a process that in effect delays meeting the child's needs. So the conflict is the process. What there should be is getting rid of statementing as a way of addressing children's needs'* (LEA9, 28-39),

supported by another respondent,

> *'well, first of all, I think the first thing to say is that the current system is undeniably bureaucratic'* (LEA7, 246-247).

Here, the data directly reflect the ethos of the recent Audit Commission's (2002) report that states that the statutory statementing process is in need of a major independent review, due to concerns about how well the statutory framework currently helps to meet children's needs (see Section 3.2). So, ideally, a child should receive the resources or school

placement to meet their specific needs, but the reality is that such a bureaucratic process is inevitably restrictive.

8.6.4.5 Absence of conflict

Although conflict loomed large in many aspects of administrators' constructions within the data, there were, however, instances in which respondents denied its existence. Rather they spoke in terms of the *potential* for conflict to exist, but that there are certain guidelines in place to prevent conflict from occurring, as in the following examples,

> *'there is the possibility of conflict but it very, very rarely materialises because we know that neither of us are right and neither of us are wrong, one's no more right than the other and certainly neither of us are wrong'* (LEA1, 207-208),

> *'Q: So do you feel any conflict there?*
> *A: I don't at all no because I think that there are guidelines'* (LEA2, 341-344).

Apparently regulatory guidelines are employed by some administrators on the understanding that this will help to minimise sites of tension; purely an administrative function. There might therefore be a relational link here to 'emotionality' in that by observing guidelines, administrators are enabled to become somewhat detached from the emotional aspects of their work thereby diverting conflict in the form of work-related stress. It must be noted, however, that these respondents were speaking about the working relationship between administrators within the same authority. But conflict between administrators and parents was also denied,

> *'Q: Who intervenes at the first level of it, would it be the Parent Partnership Scheme, or would they [parents] come straight to you?*
> *A: No, no because it isn't it isn't a conflict, yet'* (LEA1, 306-309),

> *'you see I don't see, I wouldn't use the word conflict, we don't have conflicts with parents'* (LEA9, 56-57).

This was the perspective of not all, but some respondents. Such denial of conflict would serve to act as a means of offsetting sites of conflict. However, it would be very interesting to discover the extent to which parents perceive no conflict with education administrators.

8.7 Summary

The analysis has introduced the contingency conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution: The contingency conditions have been constructed as the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, and incorporated the following sub-categories:

- Childhood disability
- Educational consumerism
- Territoriality
- Conflict
    - Funding constraints
    - Unheard recommendations
    - Emotionality
    - Idealism versus realism

The absence (or denial) of conflict has also been discussed. The analysis now moves on to consider the contextual conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution.

8.8 Contextual conditions – Policies of Inclusion

Table 3

POLICIES OF INCLUSION – sub-categories
Inclusion
Coercion
Educational settings within and outside state provision
Local movements and practices (co-location)

Table 3 above displays the sub-categories of contextual conditions constructed as policies of inclusion.

Contextual conditions reflect specific sets and patterns of conditions that intersect dimensionally at this particular time and place and create the circumstances that place the

core category into context. They are addressed via the respondents' actions and interactions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I have constructed the contextual conditions within this analysis as 'policies of inclusion' and all their accompanying complexities. The analytical construction of policies of inclusion is that, *within the context of the contemporary policies and rhetoric of educational inclusion, education administrators experience conflict in their work.*

8.8.1 Inclusion

The analytical construction of inclusion is that *inclusion forms the contextual conditions that situate the interactive effects of educational supply and demand as a contingency condition of the core category.*

Within the context of inclusion, education administrators construct conflict within their work, leading them to search for equity for all children and thus enact practices that aid in conflict resolution. Inclusion, here, is not simply defined as the drive to include all children with SEN into mainstream schools. Rather it also refers to inclusion within the wider community in general. Some special schools, for example, have a wide and varied inclusion programme to enable their youngsters to become included and to experience inclusion in the community. There were many instances in the data in which respondents spoke of inclusion. For example,

> *'what we're looking to do is, we don't look to place youngsters in special schools unless we absolutely have to'* (LEA4, 305-307),

> *'now increasingly, the pressure is on us to look to support these youngsters in mainstream school'* (LEA4, 356-357),

> *'A: At the end of the day, one of the things the assessment team would look at, first and foremost, what are the parents' wishes here, what have the parents said they want in terms of placement and provision?*
> *Q: Oh, they would look at parents as a priority?*
> *A: Oh, absolutely. It's number one. The legislation and the new Code of Practice really underlines that. But it underlines it with an inclusive spin'* (LEA5, 443-450),

> *'it's really Government saying we're pushing very hard on this inclusion agenda'* (LEA5, 456-457),

> *'the inclusion agenda is clearly a part of the future, certainly in terms of intention'* (LEA7, 658-659).

Although inclusion was discussed often, the data showed that not all respondents were in favour of inclusion and some claimed that it would not work,

> *'this rocky road of inclusion is littered with lots of pot-holes'* (LEA5, 627-628).

One respondent likened the drive towards inclusion to the catastrophic events that occurred when mental health institutions were being closed in the strive towards care in the community,

> *'it's a bit like the.....like mental health when they were closing down the mental institutions for care in the community, but they were having to do it bit by bit and they couldn't move all the money to care in the community which meant that was falling down.....so it was awful and it was all falling down, and I think that will happen without great care'* (LEA1, 837-841).

This respondent appears to suggest that a move towards inclusion for every child will be an 'awful' event. If children are placed in mainstream schools without necessary funding arrangements and proper resources being put into place to cater for their needs prior to that happening, then these children will not have their needs met successfully. This would be especially so because inclusion is a process, it cannot happen overnight, but instead 'bit by bit'. But, once more, finance is considered more so than questions of whether mainstreaming would and could be suitable and desired by all parents.

8.8.2 Coercion

The analytical construction of coercion is that *within the contextual condition of policies of inclusion, education administrators impose inclusive ideals and practices onto parents of children with SEN.*

Does the force of inclusive policy impinge upon parental choice of school? If so, are there links between contextual conditions and intervening conditions here? One important finding from this research is that education administrators are certainly seen to impose the will of the authority onto parents, supporting the governmental push towards inclusion.

The data suggest that parental choice of school might be compromised by education administrators coercing parents to submit to inclusive policies, as in the following extracts,

> *'sometimes the difficulty that we have is, when we feel a child could benefit from being reintegrated into mainstream, is actually* ***getting*** *the parents of the child to recognise that that's what they* ***ought to be doing'*** (LEA4, 323-325),

> *'they* [the Government] *have foisted things upon educators, children, families'* (LEA5, 673),

> *'...and work with parents in* ***persuading them*** *that the best thing is to be found in mainstream'* (LEA7, 677-676),

> *'once we've established the type of school, where that will be is largely taken out of our hands, because the legislation requires that we offer the parents the right to express a preference for the school that they name in part four of the statement. So what we do in our letter is we, we shouldn't do this really, but I think most parents appreciate it,* ***we steer them'*** (LEA3, 765-769). ***(My emphasis).***

However, not all parents wish their child to attend mainstream school and believe that alternative provision would be best for their child. Parents are being overpowered and oppressed by a system that, rhetorically, believes in equity for all children in terms of equal rights, equal access to the curriculum and equality of opportunity. Implicitly, there is a denial of individual agency, individual difference and parental choice of school. Contrary to inclusive policies furthering equal opportunities, the denial of parental preferences and wishes would appear to deny human rights and choice within a democratic society.

8.8.3 Educational settings within and outside state provision

The analytical construction of educational settings within and outside state provision is that *within the contextual condition of policies of inclusion, problems arise for education administrators due to the existence of special schools that fall outside local authority control in the form of independent schools.*

In other words, parents may state a preference for a particular school that falls outside their authority (for example, NICE) which may potentially be a more expensive alternative. But how are inclusive practices and CE related? Typical educational settings for children with motor disorders fall within LEA management and include mainstream schools and special schools. There is also an alternative educational setting specifically developed for children

with motor disorders, that of CE as practised by NICE, but this falls outside LEA management as it is an independent special school. In addition, other alternative educational settings are becoming available in the form of limited conductive practices within special schools, and with some special schools co-locating with mainstream schools (see Section 8.8.4), at least in some areas. So although CE once fell strictly outside local management (NICE, for example), conductive practices are now becoming more widely available within LEA management. However, there is the added caveat that funding is more readily available for schools that fall within LEA management, making choice problematic for parents who wish to opt for a school which falls outside state provision (NICE).

There is evidence within the data that parental preference for a placement at NICE would be denied primarily due to its financial burden upon the authority,

> *'well, you're back again to efficient use of resources. If it costs a full-time place at NICE maybe £20,000, well in order to get the child in a special school or resource base in the city maybe only costs me £10,000, now if I'm convinced that the £10,000 place is appropriate, it's crucial, it has to be appropriate to the child's needs, then I'm not going to fund the £20,000 place'* (LEA9, 289-293).

This particular extract has previously been included under the sub-category of funding constraints within contingency conditions. I believed it necessary to introduce this again as the statement is particularly relevant to the notion of the differences between schools that fall within and outside state management, but is very clearly related to funding issues. Asking about placement at an independent school typically elicited the same reply. NICE relies heavily upon charitable donations to provide its services perhaps going some way to reducing the resources required of the authority. Notably, not one respondent referred to this funding mechanism within the interviews.

8.8.4 Local movements and practices (co-location)

The analytical construction of local movements and practices is that *within the contextual condition of policies of inclusion, some LEAs are moving towards inclusion at a far greater rate than others in that they are co-locating special schools onto the sites of mainstream schools.*

As mentioned above, some authorities have taken the initiative to co-locate special schools onto sites of mainstream schools. Here there is the propensity for children with motor disorders receiving a form of CE within such a special school to become, at least in part, included in the academic and social activities of mainstream school. Appearing to foster the practicalities of inclusion, questions need to be asked (and probably will be asked by some parents) regarding the extent to which the basic principles of CE would be experienced by the child in this situation.

Some respondents constructed positive features of inclusion, in terms of co-locating special schools onto the sites of mainstream schools.

> *'So we have a school for the deaf that is co-locating onto a mainstream secondary school and part of that is that on the mainstream secondary curriculum there will be BSL offered as an option that mainstream youngsters can learn as well as their, so that, you know, inclusion can become a reality for the deaf children, working on that site, they'll be able to communicate, you know, at least at some level with their mainstream peers'* (LEA5, 186-191).

In co-locating this school, children would have the advantages and benefits of learning a diverse range of alternative skills, such as British Sign Language. Referring to the paradigm of axial coding (Fig 2), there are links here between the conflict that is experienced by education administrators within the contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand and the contextual condition of inclusion, in terms of co-location. Co-location is possibly one further means of attempting to head off possible sites of tension between parental requests for specialist non-maintained schools and the contemporary policies and practises of inclusion; children would have the dual benefit of special provision together with mainstream inclusion. However, it could be argued that conductive practices may be diluted to account for other demands required of such a growing school. This clearly needs further research as the practice of co-location increases.

8.9 Summary

The analysis has introduced contextual conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution. Contextual conditions have been constructed as policies of inclusion and incorporated the following sub-categories:

- Inclusion
- Coercion
- Educational settings within and outside state provision
- Local movements and practices (co-location)

The analysis now moves on to consider the intervening conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution.

8.10 Intervening conditions – Disparate understandings

Table 4

DISPARATE UNDERSTANDINGS – sub-categories
Parental involvement
Parental choice of CE
Administrators' understanding of CE
Training for consistency

Table 4 above displays the sub-categories of intervening conditions constructed as disparate understandings.

Intervening conditions mitigate or alter the impact of contingency conditions on the phenomenon and arise out of unexpected events (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This analysis focuses on parental knowledge of education, the statementing process and choice of school for children with motor disorders. It became apparent that parents' understandings of CE are different to administrators'. Therefore, the intervening conditions have been constructed as disparate understandings of CE. The analytical construction of intervening conditions of disparate understandings may be explained as, *under contingency conditions of interactive effects of educational supply and demand, and within contextual conditions of policies of inclusion, intervening conditions of disparate understandings of CE between parents and administrators make decision-making problematic.*

8.10.1 Parental involvement

The analytical construction of parental involvement is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, and within contextual conditions of policies of inclusion, intervening conditions specifically include parental involvement in the statementing process.*

Parental involvement being at the forefront of most recent legislation in the United Kingdom (DfE, 1996; DES, 2001) provides a potential source of complex issues that relate to and strongly alters the impact of the contingency conditions of the core category. Within the contemporary market force approach to education, parents expect the best for their children in terms of education, therefore some actively strive to achieve the best, when sometimes this is contrary to what it may be reasonable to expect. For example, some parents actively seek CE for their child, but LEAs are sometimes reticent when it comes to providing such (expensive) alternatives to its state managed schooling. Relational links may be seen here to contextual conditions of policies of inclusion (educational settings within and outside state provision), and also to contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand (funding constraints).

The issue of parental involvement becomes problematic for administrators directly involved in the statementing process. Legislation pertaining to parental choice gives advantage to some kinds of parents (for example, the more literate, politically aware parents) over others causing a degree of discrimination, either positive or negative,

> *'of course we'll have parents who are very articulate, and maybe have professional backgrounds or whatever it is, and they may be the ones who hit the phone and write letters and ask for meetings. Whereas other parents who don't have adequate education, maybe don't speak English as a first language, think well, what can we do, we can't fight against authority'* (LEA9, 128-132),

> *'we have a legislature which tends to disappoint, to give advantage to the kind of parents, the kind of families that I mentioned earlier'* (LEA5, 384-386),

> *'parents who have gone on to influence power, who are politically aware and politically astute can use the system very, very effectively'* (LEA5, 359-361).

These findings appear to support Macready (1991) and Gross (1996), in that there does seem to be a bias towards more articulate and politically aware parents. For example, these parents' wishes would be met as they may exercise more power than others to obtain the educational resources they want for their child.

The data show that parental knowledge of education is sometimes inadequate and unqualified, at least as far as is understood by education administrators. Take the following extracts,

> *'we've got one who has asked for, for the right reasons, we feel as professionals, the wrong school'* (LEA1, 291-292),
>
> *'but the specialism isn't as specialised as the parents are thinking'* (LEA1, 294-295).

One major issue to emerge for Owens (2000), was that parents' are considered to be ill-informed with regard to both education and childhood disability, and biased essentially as they are subjectively involved in their child's welfare. The data here strongly supports this notion that LEAs pay little heed to parental experiences and understandings and appear to have stereotyped ideas of parental knowledge and expectations.

There is a relationship between parents' involvement in their child's education and the conflict that education administrators experience, in terms of expectations versus reality (see also contingency conditions: idealism versus realism). This links clearly with conflict resolution experienced by education administrators in their search for equity.

8.10.2 Parental choice of conductive education

The analytical construction of parental choice of CE is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, and within contextual conditions of policies of inclusion, intervening conditions specifically include parental preferences and requests for a placement for their child at NICE.*

Education administrators make concerted attempts to find out how much parents know, whether they have amassed the right information, whether they really believe, perhaps, that the educational setting that has been requested is appropriate to meet their child's present

and future needs. Interesting to note, also, is the emergent finding that parents are asked to justify their choice of CE, as in the following quotation,

> *'we need to talk about this, we understand what you're saying, but can you tell us why you've chosen that, can we talk about it because we think we've got initially, but have you looked at it, you know, and we'll meet with them'* (LEA1, 297-300).

Again, there is emphasis on negotiation of the issues involved in parental choice of school or educational setting. Yet there is the implication that parental choice is not supported with evidence. In other words, parents must justify their choice to their LEA. Links may be seen here specifically to the actions/interactions conditions by which administrators negotiate with parents.

Parental involvement in the statementing process for children with motor disorders would of necessity include parental expectations of their child's educational future. On first learning of their child's physical and therefore developmental disabilities and abilities, some parents might actively strive to understand what educational options are available, sometimes long before their child reaches school age. Therefore many parents might be equipped, not only with an understanding of their child's particular needs, but also knowledge of alternative educational approaches and schools available. Therefore it could be argued that parents are not ill-informed, as found by Owens (2000).

One respondent articulated the need to find a balance between a child's academic achievement and physical and mobility improvement,

> *'I look at the whole child. I'm really only supposed to comment on the physical needs, but it's very difficult to separate that out from, you know, learning needs as well'* (LEA6, 249-250).

In other words, administrators take many factors into consideration following a parental request for CE, for example, physical abilities /disabilities, academic/curricular factors, mobility and social gains, and seek to find a placement in which all factors would be addressed. This respondent, however, appears unsympathetic to CE, as evidenced in the following extract,

> *'the children I've known who have been there [NICE] have done very well, but they've done very well on the physical side. When it's come to looking at social skills and their academic progress, they haven't done as well as they might have done had they been in mainstream'* (LEA6, 677-679).

Critically, there is no definitive method of comparing how well a child may develop in either setting: this is pure supposition. Certainly, because LEAs are not obliged to fund a school placement outside their own available resources (DES, 2001), parents must thus defend their choice of 'outside' provision, particularly in instances where parents have requested CE at NICE. However, LEAs are obliged to provide parents with details about every school, and this information is sent to parents with the proposed statement of SEN. Parents are then able to state their preference for a particular school. Armed with this wealth of information on all the schools available to them, parents are then able to make an informed decision as to the appropriate school for their child,

> *'they're going to make an informed choice, a more informed choice about their needs and about their child'* (LEA3, 675-676),

But should parents then opt to select CE for their child, they are still required to justify their choice to their LEA. It appears to be a no-win situation for parents.

> *'The legislation requires that we offer the parents the right to express a preference for the school that they name in part four of the statement. So what we do in our letter is we, we shouldn't do this really, but I think most parents appreciate it, we steer them'* (LEA3, 767-769).

This extract is interpreted as the authority giving parents the option to choose a school, but with the subtle caveat that they are guided into a choice made by the authority, usually in terms of inclusion, parents being 'steered' in the direction of mainstream schools wherever possible. There is a relationship here between intervening conditions (parental choice of CE) and contextual conditions of coercion (see Section 8.8.2).

Conflicts may therefore arise for education administrators as a possible result of contextual conditions such as local movements in terms of inclusive practices and the intervening conditions of parental requests for a pure CE environment for their child, as practised at NICE. It is now becoming clear as to just how complex these inter-relationships are between each condition and how they each, in turn, relate to the phenomenon.

8.10.3 Administrators' understandings of CE

The analytical construction of administrators' understandings of CE is that *within intervening conditions of disparate understandings, education administrators possess different levels of understanding of conductive education.*

The assumption of the role of education in moderating the effects of childhood disability suggests that decision-makers possess sufficient expertise, experience and the necessary resources by which to do so in the contemporary ethos of consumerism, choice and inclusion. Tensions may arise for administrators when it is evidenced that what they understand about a particular pedagogy or school is different to how parents understand it or, indeed, when they profess their knowledge to be quite limited.

The data show that there is a concern regarding the knowledge base of education administrators. Since it has been found that parents sometimes feel their educational choices ill-informed and undervalued (Owens, 2000), it was important to focus on the understandings of administrators in order to find any discrepancies as this was thought to impact upon a positive or negative decision regarding a placement at NICE. Discrepancies and different levels of understanding were found in the data.

For example, all respondents were asked about their knowledge of CE and most responses were negatively expressed,

> *'Q: Could I ask you how much you know about conductive education?*
> *A: Not an awful lot, because a lot of our children who could possibly end up in an environment like the conductive education institute would be very much dealt with by our complex and profound learning difficulties school that has intensive support from [health professionals]...I personally don't know an awful lot about what they [NICE] do'* (LEA8, 630-646).

Some respondents displayed an understanding that the way in which CE is practised at NICE is fundamentally different from that of special schools that claim to offer CE,

> *'Q: Do they [special school] follow the same principles of conductive education there?*
> *A: No wholly, not to that extent obviously'* (LEA1, 382-384),

> *'oh, none of our schools are providing conductive education as NICE would provide it'* (LEA9, 299).

However, one respondent was under the impression that both practices are similar,

> *'so I say to these parents, right, we have an excellent school at [special school]. [Special school] can do what it is that the National Institute say that they're doing'* (LEA4, 192-194).

Now, this respondent believes that a special school in the city can offer children the same programme of CE that NICE offers. But this is not so, as although some special schools do offer some kind of conductive practice deployed by a qualified conductor, it is by no means the same as that delivered by NICE. Such schools offer a version of CE, indeed it may be called motor-based learning, but NICE offers much more (see Section 4.7). This information was elicited through the preliminary interviews with personnel from special schools, demonstrating the importance of this initial exploratory study in gaining background information. In the following extract, by feigning ignorance of these differences, I attempted to elicit what exactly the respondent understands of CE compared with motor-based learning.

> *'Q: What I don't understand as yet is the difference between motor-based learning and conductive education.*
> *A: Yes.*
> *Q: Can you help?*
> *A: No'* (LEA4, 250-257).

Surprisingly, the response was similar from an educational psychologist,

> *'I'm not up-to-date with the approaches they're using...I can't really answer this one. I don't have enough information'* (LEA5, 568-575).

Educational psychologists, by their very professional position, offer direct psychological support and guidance for children in classroom settings (DfEE, 2000a). This being so, one might well ask how it is that this respondent is not conversant with current educational approaches.

However, one respondent, although initially claiming no knowledge of the differences between motor-based learning and CE, later acknowledged these differences, going on to explain that,

> *'the evidence that we've had is that the National Institute spend a lot of time on the physical aspect and less on the curricular and intellectual development side of things'* (LEA4, 194-196),

> *'the way that conductive education operates is much more traditionally in line with the Peto method...it's a very total programme...from morning 'till night, it's a lot of guided physical movement linked to the sort of the music and the poems and so on, whereas the motor-based learning is less rigid in that sense'* (LEA4, 257-261).

The philosophy of CE is that of developing orthofunction (see Section 4.7.6) by enhancing intrinsic motivation for the child via an holistic approach. In this interview extract, although the respondent displayed a basic understanding of the practical aspects of CE, knowledge of its cognitive and ecologically relevant features are absent. However, one point is made clear, that CE is a 'very total programme', an important feature preferred by many parents and certainly not encompassed within motor-based learning in special schools.

Such diverse understandings of CE means that education administrators make decisions about school placement for children with motor disorders even though they possess disparate understandings of alternative educational programmes that are available. It is clear why problems may arise between parents and administrators during the statementing process as parents are often more informed about CE than are administrators.

Almost a decade ago, Taylor and Emery (1995) wrote,

> *'the range of misconceptions among [education administrators] does, at the moment, inhibit the development of...choice for parents'* (p.16).

It appears that, in the interim, no significant changes have come about. The effects of this are that, by remaining ignorant about various alternative educational approaches, education administrators are denying children opportunities which might work for them, and in so doing, are maintaining practices that serve to keep children disabled and prevent them from

participating fully in society to the best of their ability. The data show that such disparate understandings and/or ignorance may be due to limited training opportunities.

8.10.4 Training for consistency

The analytical construction of training for consistency is that *within intervening conditions of disparate understandings, education administrators have limited opportunities for training.*

In order for children with motor disorders to have the best possible educational, social and life experiences, it is essential that they have access to the most appropriate school to suit their present and future needs. If disparate understandings of CE exist between parents and administrators, then previous, on-going and future training opportunities for education administrators should be explored to assess the appropriateness of their engagement in the school selection process.

Administrators on the sharp end of statement construction itself possess insufficient and incomplete knowledge of childhood disabilities and their related pedagogies due to limited training opportunities. When asked about prior training, one respondent stated,

> *'it is very brief. I've got a degree in psychology...but I've had no, I don't know what training you'd have to be a principal statements officer, there aren't any set courses'* (LEA1, 12-15).

It came to light during this interview that there would shortly be a vacancy for a statementing officer in the SEN division of the LEA. Requirements for the post included a degree level education, with applicants having some experience of working for the local authority (but not necessarily within education),

> *'when we advertise, which we'll be doing soon, we'll be looking for obviously a degree qualification, someone who can throw a couple of sentences together, in English, grammatically, but I don't think that you've got to have this, this and this qualification...it's better if somebody comes from an education background when they've done some work in education rather than in, say, housing, but then I worked in housing for eighteen months, so...'* (LEA1, 17-26).

This respondent went on to explain, as did many others, that once *in situ* there are very little specific training courses related to the area of work of statementing and review.

Although sporadic opportunities are offered for training in childhood medical conditions, attendance is not mandatory. This seemed to be consistent across LEAs studied.

> *'LEA officers don't tend to go on very many courses that allow them to become more specialised in special needs'* (LEA8, 657-658),

> *'what we don't actually end up doing is doing any research or any in-depth sort of thinking or going through and finding out what other agencies are doing or finding out about institutes and what they have to offer'* (LEA8, 665-667),

> *'there isn't any specific training that I've ever undertaken or been involved in'* (LEA8, 675-676).

Importantly, however, it became apparent that some respondents considered the need for training to be high,

> *'if we're not going to make time for training...the more we come across difficult situations and the more we...get more and more involved, then yes, we do need to expand out knowledge base, because the more you obviously know about what you're talking about, the better placed you are in resolving that issue'* (LEA8, 718-724),

> *'we could all do with developing our knowledge base and we could all do with embracing more'* (LEA8, 1212-1213).

But there was one proviso,

> *'but it's how do you fit that in to the strategic planning, or with reviewing this, or with developing this, we're changing this, we're changing that'* (LEA8, 1213-1215).

To briefly summarise, education administrators could potentially be appointed on the basis of their academic qualifications and (relevant?) work experience. Moreover, subsequent training is arbitrary, often desired, but pragmatically problematic. However, educational psychologists, by the very nature of their substantial training, appear to be the exception to the rule when compared with other statementing personnel, and appear best placed to recommend the most appropriate educational option for children with motor disorders. However, such recommendations may be compromised by the dual nature of their work: school-based help and support, and statutory duties of assessment.

One respondent provided information to support their high level of training by describing the route to becoming a chartered educational psychologist,

> *'I think the majority of newly qualified EPs have followed that sort of progression from first degree in psychology, PGCE, teaching experience, Master's degree'* (LEA5, 42-44).

Here there is clear evidence of a thorough academic training, close involvement in children's needs and interest in child development, both theoretically and practically. Recommendations made by an educational psychologist towards a child's statement should therefore be based on sound knowledge and experience gained through professional training, something lacking in most other SEN administrators.

Critically, sporadic and limited training opportunities offer a bare minimum level of ways in which education administrators may improve their understandings of childhood disabilities and alternative educational programmes. This may be seen as the effects of governmental regulatory practices in place to encourage mainstreaming for children with disabilities as a cost-cutting exercise. Little wonder administrators cite insufficient financial resources as a reason to refuse a placement at NICE; such justifications obscure their limited understanding of what it is they are refusing.

8.11 Summary

The analysis has introduced the intervening conditions of disparate understandings as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution. The intervening conditions have incorporated the following sub-categories:

- Parental involvement
- Parental choice of conductive education
- Administrators' understandings of CE
- Training for consistency

The analysis now moves on to consider the actions/interactions conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution.

8.12 Actions/interactions – Negotiation

Table 5

NEGOTIATION – sub-categories
Searching for equity
Teamwork
Personalising

Table 5 above displays the sub-categories of the actions/interactions condition constructed as negotiation.

The conditional actions/interactions refers to the behaviours used by respondents in order to handle certain situations or problems, in terms of what they do or say (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The analytical construction of negotiation is that *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, within contextual conditions of policies of inclusion, and within intervening conditions of disparate understandings, education administrators act and interact through negotiation in order to counteract the effects of potential or actual sites of conflict within their work.*

The actions and interactions evidenced in the data are considered to be a response to the intervening conditions. In this sense, 'negotiation' is constructed as being a response to disparate understandings of CE in the statementing process for children with SEN and parental preference of CE. How administrators deal with conflict within their work is demonstrated in their continual negotiation, the sub-categories of which are shown in the table above and explained below.

Negotiation is seen to occur in two respects. Firstly, education administrators negotiate between themselves, behind the scenes as it were and invisible to parents, striving to reach a decision whereby the view of the authority is one of consensus. Secondly, negotiations are evidenced between administrators and parents in further striving to compromise or reach a decision that is acceptable to both parties concerned,

> *'in reality, much of the work of the assessment officers is involved in problem solving along the way, negotiating solutions, discussing with parents, meeting with parents, meeting with schools, trying to find ways around problems'* (LEA7, 44-46),
>
> *'it's negotiation tactics all the time'* (LEA2, 553-554).

Clear relational links maybe found between 'negotiation' and 'teamwork' (see Section 8.12.2).

8.12.1 Searching for equity

The analytical construction of searching for equity is that *within actions/interactions conditions, education administrators search for equity in their decision-making in order to offset potential sites of tension.*

Searching for equity in education administrators' decision-making is one sub-category of 'negotiation' by which respondents articulated attempts to treat all children fairly during the statementing process as opposed to examining the interests of a particular child's individual educational needs. Overall, administrators are continually searching for equity, which is constructed as the action taken to resolve conflict that they face in their daily employment. Administrators are attempting to view the decisions they make on behalf of children with motor disorders in as fair a way as they are able, and that by treating all children under the rubric of SEN the same, feelings of conflict may be neutralised. Such actions are therefore strongly related to the identified phenomenon constructed as 'conflict resolution'.

To exemplify the notion of equity, the following extracts have been taken from interviews of which the undertones were specifically that the administrators perform their job with this sense of fairness continually uppermost in mind,

> *'so there's issues of fairness, there's issues of consistency in decision-making'* (LEA7, 202-203),
>
> *'I suppose this theme of equity runs through that and the things that I do, that I like. Decisions that we make do affect, not only the children who the decision's about, but to all children whether they've got special needs or not'* (LEA7, 562-564),

> *'I think that sometimes there's a danger that anyone.....who gets wrapped up in the needs of a particular child, that they can lose the bigger picture.....we do have this inner kind of conflict between wanting to do our best for the child and wanting to do our best for the children in our local authority'* (LEA5, 754-762).

The drive towards inclusion plays a huge part in issues of equity - the need to provide for all children, at all levels of ability, having (or trying to maintain) a sense of fairness to all children, across all divides. So there are links here between searching for equity and the contextual condition of policies of inclusion. But there are also issues of territoriality (see Section 8.6.3). One respondent spoke about the notion of being fair to children who live in a particular city under conditions of having to consider children from outside the city. For example,

> *'we need to keep some provision for the [city's] children. If we just use it all up and we then get a youngster with a disability in [city] that needs a place, we might find we're not able to locate them'* (LEA4, 93-96).

So there are clear links here between negotiation in searching for equity and the interactive effects of educational supply and demand in terms of territoriality (see Section 8.6.3).

Equity also refers to equality of opportunity. To exemplify this notion of equity, the following extracts clearly demonstrate some respondents' commitment to equality of opportunity. The administrators' sense of fairness is born out in that equal opportunities are explicitly mentioned,

> *'what we have to do is try and operate an equal opportunities policy'* (LEA5, 366),

> *'well I'm sure it's equitable, it depends what you mean by equitable to all children. It's like an equal opportunities policy, isn't it?'* (LEA9, 122-123).

Searching for equity in educational decision-making appears to be a switch from the medical model of disability to the social (see Section 2.3). LEA administrators operate within a social model also in their drive towards mainstream inclusion. But there is evidence of incompatibility between conceptual models in that parents of children with motor disorders sometimes remain locked in the medical model whereby they view their child's needs in terms of their disability. Such incompatibility is likely to result in

problematic patterns of communication that will inevitably lead to confusion, frustration and conflict. If CE may be viewed as working within the conceptual models of transaction or education, it may be assumed that incompatibility and miscommunication is further confounded.

8.12.2 Teamwork

The analytical construction of teamwork is that *within actions/interactions conditions, education administrators collaborate through teamwork in order to counteract the effects of conflict and to minimise stress in their work by sharing decision-making.*

'Teamwork' appeared in all education administrators' constructions of their work, to either a greater or lesser degree, in the statementing process for children with SEN. This conceptualisation included many aspects of LEA duties. For example, many respondents spoke of decisions made in terms of 'we', 'our' and 'us'. Decisions are, in the main, made in conjunction with fellow workers, sometimes on panels, and also following many discussions and meetings with parents. It is certainly interesting to note that no respondent spoke of decisions being made on an individual basis. The following interview extracts serve to support the notion that decisions are universally made following a consensus of opinion and agreement,

> *'so we do discuss. There's a lot of areas that overlap and there's a lot of discussion. **Our** room is quite small, as offices go it's quite small, so it's bandied about, so we all know what's going on **with each other**, because we are so compact and bijou. So we know a lot of what's going on in **each other's** area in the team so.....I'll say, '(name), this one will need to go to', so I will determine that, but (name) will actually do the logistics of it'* (LEA1, 81-86),

> *'we have lots of, yes, we have lots of meetings and 'talking-throughs' and 'floating-bys' and things like that.....although we've got **our** own sort of areas to work to, it's very much a team'* (LEA1, 91-93),

> *'we work so closely as a team and the personalities within **our** team, we get on so well, and we need to, we shout and swear.....and that helps'* (LEA1, 105-107) **(my emphasis).**

Indeed, in any situation in which difficult decisions have to be made, there may very well be elements of psychological stress (shouting and swearing) as some administrators struggle to cope with the implications of the decisions they make. This is offset by the help

and support received from team-members. This respondent was a warm, friendly and very personable character, and I immediately felt that negotiation and teamwork were strong features of the administrator's working day (see Appendix V - Interview Field Notes).

> *'We are a sharing team. If somebody's got a problem about something or needs a bit of advice, we advise and help each other'* (LEA3, 122-124),

> *'well in terms of support and so on, decisions are made by the panel after they look at all the information'* (LEA6, 180-181),

> *'I think there is generally a* ***consensus*** *about the decision. I guess I have a lot of experience in making this type of decision.....when we moved to the panel system, in a sense the same kind of issues arise. My role, I guess, is to bring my experience to bear in making sure that the full range of issues are discussed'* (LEA7, 92-100) **(my emphasis).**

This sort of teamwork may also be understood as a mutual support system, whereby difficult decisions that need to be made are shared by all (or at least many) members of the team and, in so doing, stress levels may perhaps be moderated. Again, these tactics serve to resolve conflict. Two of the respondents quoted above worked in an environment in which it was made exceptionally easy to converse with colleagues in that all members of the SEN administration team worked in the same office which was, in the respondent's words, 'compact and bijou' (LEA1, 84). Diffusion of responsibility was captured succinctly by one respondent who stated,

> *'I like the job that I'm currently in...that's a nice role to have because...I'm not the name in the frame or I haven't got the ultimate responsibility if things go wrong'* (LEA5, 800-803).

Importantly, in this study, the viewpoints of parents themselves were not sought, as the sole emphasis was on education administrators' experiences and how they were constructed. Parents' perspectives have been investigated and reported elsewhere (Owens, 2000). So although some researchers have typically found that some parents particularly highlight the failure of professionals to effectively communicate with them (Appleton and Minchom, 1991), respondents in this research spoke of negotiation with parents.

However, by avoiding individual responsibility within decision-making through creating teams and panels, interpreted as an equitable practice between administrators, respondents

are implicitly positioned as enmeshed in the organisational polices and practices which continue to preserve disabling practices.

Allied to this notion of negotiation and communication, the literature shows that parents are often faced with statements embedded with professional jargon (Davis, 1993; Holland, 1996) that they find inaccessible and confusing, and stress the need for jargon-free communication which would engender less frustration and more workable partnership relationships. This notion was certainly found within the data,

> *'I mean, we're all used to the jargon, we're all used to civil service speak now because we see so much of it, but the average parent can't speak it'* (LEA3, 751-753),

> *'now we've got to try very hard to make sure that the parents understand what their rights are. It has to be written in a form they can understand, you know, jargon-free'* (LEA9, 166-168).

This shows how teamwork may be expanded to further incorporate parents in the negotiation and decision-making process.

In some instances, respondents made reference to negotiation and teamwork with other agencies. Particularly relevant to children with physical disabilities or motor disorders is the role the health service has to play in the statementing process. The extent to which negotiations are centred around school options appear to suggest involvement with the health service. For example, one respondent spoke of a multi care management group encompassed within one authority that is involved in decision-making for children with these kinds of difficulties.

> *'Yes, the MCMG, yeah, we'll consider cases like that and make sure that everything's put in place that needs to be in place.....so there's a lot of negotiation and discussion'* (LEA4, 426-439).

Clearly, the assessment process allows health professionals to compile and deliver a report on the appropriate needs and resources required for a particular child, yet parents are not permitted to be included in the MCMG. The same respondent went on to recount a story about a child whose parents had requested a placement at NICE but this had been refused, with a placement offered at a special school in another authority that included a motor-

based learning programme. The parents were not happy with this decision and had taken their case to the SEN tribunal for consideration. These types of occurrences however are very few and far between, according to the respondent,

> *'...we don't have many of those, I mean, well it's not just a finger of one hand, I think that the [child] you referred to is the only case over the last ten years that I can remember where.....the parents of a child with physical disabilities has contested what it is that we were proposing'* (LEA4, 454-458).

So even though teamwork is most evident within LEAs, the role and support of the health service during the assessment stage of the statementing process can appear invisible to parents. Much work clearly needs to be done to foster more transparent inter-agency collaboration in helping children to receive the most suitable school setting that is both relevant to their needs and relevant to parents' preferences.

8.12.3 Personalising

The analytic interpretation of personalising is that *within actions/interactions conditions, education administrators personalise their experiences, in order to make sense of their work and to justify their decisions from a personal perspective.*

Personalising is a sub-category of negotiation and is constructed as the ways in which some education administrators' personal experiences (perhaps of friends and family with physical disabilities) affect how they view their working practices. Personalising also illustrates how they make sense of the work they do and the decisions they make for children with SEN such as motor disorders. Some respondents gave public accounts in which they presented more socially acceptable versions of educational administrative practices. Others provided private accounts in which they referred to more personal experiences, including their friends and families. For example, the frequent use of phrases such as 'as a local authority officer', 'as a parent' and 'as a corporate parent' serves to position administrators within a relationship of power, constructing themselves as individuals who have influence and control over children.

By referring to their own personal experiences, education administrators are making comparisons with the children with whom their work brings them into contact. Previous

experience may or may not bias their judgements but are used, nonetheless, in their negotiations, perhaps in the hope of justifying decisions on a personal level,

> *'my friend has no legs, she has spina bifida, and six years ago she had her legs amputated. There's nowt wrong with her brain, we run round together in [town].....and you hear people say, 'does she take sugar?' and, 'I dunno, ask her', you know and when we go to the counter, I'll walk off and leave her so that they have to deal with it'* (LEA1, 737-741),

> *'I think you've got to try and put yourself in his parents' position'* (LEA1, 707),

> *'I've got four children of my own actually so I suppose I am, but yes. It is the children I'm there for really'* (LEA6, 152-153),

> *'when I'm asked questions like that, I try to think myself into my parent role. I happen to have three kids, but none of them had any serious special educational needs'* (LEA5, 258-259),

> *'you also get the people who actually meet with children and families and see things, not just in all of those areas, but from another area, a personal area, an area of yes, I can understand, yes, I know where you're coming from'* (LEA8, 1348-1351).

By contrast, there are exceptions to this notion of 'personalising', and one respondent directly contradicts the idea of giving a personal slant to their work,

> *'so it isn't my own personal, you know, experiences'* (LEA2, 347-348).

Rather what this respondent offers instead is LEA guidelines and governmental policies that are adhered to within the process of carrying out relevant duties. Personal issues do not appear to be brought to bear on this respondent's work. However, this was the only instance in the interview data in which a respondent disconfirmed the issue of personalising. But the observation notes from phase 2 of the research once more confirmed this lack of personalising. It became apparent within conversations in the LEA office that there were many administrators who have children of their own who have some form of SEN. When I asked whether administrators enter the job because of this, one administrator replied that it was 'just coincidence' (see Appendix VI).

8.13 Summary

The analysis has introduced the actions/interactions conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution. The actions/interactions conditions have been constructed as negotiation and incorporated the following sub-categories:

- Searching for equity
- Teamwork
- Personalising

The analysis now moves on to illustrate the consequential conditions of the theory.

8.14. Consequences – Balance

Table 6

BALANCE – sub-categories
Transparency of process Psychological equilibrium Parental choice of conductive education met or denied?

Table 6 above displays the sub-categories of the consequential condition constructed as balance.

Consequences occur as a result of the actions/interactions of respondents in response to an issue or problem (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The analytic construction of 'balance' may be explained as, *under contingency conditions of the interactive effects of educational supply and demand, within contextual conditions of policies of inclusion, within intervening conditions of disparate understandings of CE and by actions/interactions in the form of negotiation, educational administrators strive to resolve conflict in order to reach a balance.*

The consequences of conflict resolution are varied but the overall conceptualisation of these consequences is 'balance'. Balance may be constructed in various ways, such as

achieving a transparency of process accessible to all, or reaching a state of psychological equilibrium. Alternatively, finding a balance may be constructed as actually achieving equity for all children. One further, important consequence of conflict resolution is that, by this process, parental choice of CE (or, for that matter, any other specialist education that falls 'outside' state provision) is either met or (more often than not) denied.

> *'Now it is all about finances at the end of the day, it's about finances with everything in life, it's not just about education, there isn't an infinite pot there, and so it's about parents as well having realistic expectations about what is the best service that's available for their child, not trying to go for something that's not there and not available. It is about this balance'* (LEA2, 661-665),

> *'then you have to balance what you believe from a policy and a strategic point of view to what you think is best from a personal point of view as well. Again, it's that balance'* (LEA8, 1351-1353).

Critically, education administrators have internalised organisational and governmental techniques of surveillance, in that the balance they achieve is linked to higher order expectations of what they should be doing (see Chapter 10).

8.14.1 Transparency of process

The analytical construction of transparency of process is that *within the consequential condition of balance, education administrators achieve a transparency of process in which everyone (including parents) may clearly understand what, why and how decisions are made.*

One possible construction of the outcome or consequences of the many complex relationships within this grounded theory framework is that administrators are able to achieve a certain 'transparency of process' with regard to their decisions for children with SEN.

> *'If you're going to work with problems and if you're going to work with children and families, you have to have that transparency. I don't want to have a hidden agenda'* (LEA8, 1321-1323),

> *'so, although there are always grey areas when it comes down to carrying out an assessment or allocating resources, in the main I think we've got a fairly robust*

> *system for making decisions that's transparent, that's shared with schools that in the main they understand and have regard for'* (LEA5, 137-141).

Only by showing transparency of process can LEAs promote collaboration and knowledge transfer between themselves and parents. When administrators are able to clarify explicitly their positions within the local Government system, they are more likely to increase parental participation.

However, transparency of process is difficult to achieve because parents and administrators speak in two different registers (see Section 8.10), and their knowledge and understanding of different educational practices ensures that the process of statementing is opaque rather than transparent.

8.14.2 Psychological Equilibrium

The analytical construction of psychological equilibrium is that *within the consequential condition of balance, education administrators achieve a state of psychological equilibrium, having minimised or counteracted many sites of tension and stress through the process of conflict resolution.*

One construction of balance is that conflict resolution helps education administrators to reach a psychological state of equilibrium following a length of time in turmoil or disequilibrium, caused by the conflict experienced in their everyday work. A balanced state of mind is achieved when all necessary steps have been taken to counteract the psychological effects of conflict. However,

> *'of course, they may meet the parents who may be in tears and then it's a very stressful time for anybody'* (LEA9, 378-379).

8.14.3 Parental choice of conductive education met or denied?

The analytical construction of parental choice of CE met or denied is that *within the consequential condition of balance, education administrators either grant or refuse parental choice of conductive education.*

In striving to be equitable to all children, whether or not they have been identified as having SEN, particularly in the context of inclusion, what might be the outcome for parents

who have specifically requested a placement at NICE for their child with a motor disorder? The data show that since a placement here falls outside state management and is an expensive alternative intervention, such requests are typically refused, usually on the grounds that the LEA can provide appropriate education within its own boundaries and within its own state schooling, but also because administrators have disparate understandings of CE compared with parents' understandings.

There are clear links here between all conditions of the model (Fig 2). The core category of conflict resolution (searching for equity to avoid conflict) can be related to the contingency conditions (sub-category - territoriality), contextual conditions (policies of inclusion), intervening conditions (disparate understandings), consequential conditions (sub-category - choice met or denied) and also actions/interactions conditions (negotiation).

It was difficult to select an appropriate quotation by which to adequately illustrate this sub-category. However, one quotation is succinct in summing up the situation,

> *'the local authority's duty is to make provision that's appropriate to the child's needs, which is suitable to the child's needs. It doesn't have to make the best provision'* (LEA3, 918-920).

Implicit here is an acknowledgement that CE might be the best provision. Certainly, many respondents, when talking of constraints on funding and resources, liken school choice to buying a car. For example, 'you have to have the car you can afford (Ford Cortina), not the one you particularly want (Mercedes Benz)' (see Appendix V - Interview Field Notes).

8.15 Summary

The analysis has introduced the consequential conditions as they relate to the core category of conflict resolution. The consequential conditions have been constructed as balance and incorporated the following sub-categories:

- Transparency of process
- Psychological equilibrium
- Parental choice of CE met or denied

8.16 Discussion

I approached the research with the preconception that administrators would refer to financial resources when conversing about their decision-making when a child is undergoing the statementing process. In other words, funding from any public sector service is always a potential site of tension and I believed that education authorities would not be dissimilar in this respect. It seemed fair to suspect that financial resources (or particularly a lack of financial resources) would impinge upon any decisions made on behalf of a child, particularly so when the child's parents request an expensive alternative to state managed educational provision. Data obtained from this investigation certainly led to an understanding that parents would typically be refused a placement for their child at NICE on the basis that such a placement would not be an equitable use of resources.

During the interviewing process, however, it became apparent that, although all respondents did refer to financial resources, the most salient referent was the attempt to address issues of fairness. In essence, the notion of equity loomed large in almost all interviews, as did notions of conflict, with one impacting heavily upon the other.

Although issues of funding appeared in the data, grounded theory methodology allows for deeper analysis of major emergent themes in their construction by the researcher. One such theme was clearly acknowledged as being administrators' conflict resolution by searching for equity to moderate the effects of experienced or potential conflict. The potential for claims of discrimination between children is high in terms of fair levels of funding. So for education administrators to grant a child a placement at NICE would be to use scarce resources in an unfair way and also to elicit a backlash from various areas such as budget controllers and parents alike. In refusing to fund placements at NICE, education administrators are counter-measuring against the expected repercussions of such actions. Repercussions might generally take the form of accusations of discrimination from other parents, accusations of unfair resource allocation from both parents and LEAs alike, and accusations from higher tier education managers of insufficient residual funding for other children of equal need.

The findings from this aspect of the analysis would appear to support Llewellyn (1999) and Owens (2000) in that, notwithstanding the rhetoric of parental choice, parents would typically not be granted the school placement of their choosing. In other words, their

choice of CE would be refused by administrators due to continual negotiations in searching for equity to resolve potential sites of conflict.

8.17 Critical analysis

From the initial descriptive central story line (see Section 8.3) of what is going on in the data, a critical analysis serves to further problematise the constructions of education administrators. Here, it is shown how a deep immersion in the data can add a new perspective. This critical summary should be read in line with the central story line (see Section 8.3) and its summary (see Section 8.4).

Within the interactive effects of educational supply and demand (see Section 8.6), and in the contextual rhetoric and practice of inclusion (see Section 8.8), education administrators sustain notions of disability by coercing parents of children with SEN towards mainstream school over other possible alternatives. Education administrators sustain notions of disability by their practices in that what mainstream schools do for many children with disabilities is further enhance their 'difference', yet administrators strive to place many children there against the wishes of their parents. Inclusive education is not suitable for all children and, indeed, is sometimes not wanted by either the children themselves or their parents – they might prefer to be in a more specialised environment, essentially being included with others of a similar nature. By stressing issues of physical access (see Section 8.6.1), the problems children face in mainstream schools are further intensified. By doing so, discourses of difference are accentuated with the medical model of disability being implicitly implicated, and the child remains pathologised. They remain pathologised because by stressing the physical 'cause' or nature of children's problems, the social, behavioural and emotional aspects of their development are ignored. Instead of being equal partners in the decision-making process, administrators prefer rather to work from a distance, creating teams and panels of decision-makers in which individual responsibility is diluted and from which parents are clearly prohibited (see Section8.12.2). Power imbalances are therefore perpetuated.

Disparate understandings of CE identified within the statementing process intervene to heighten the conflict faced by administrators (see Section 8.10). Arguably, parents requesting a placement at NICE would have actively strived to gain substantial knowledge and understanding of a programme of CE offered by NICE, hence this preference over

mainstream or special schools. However, sporadic and limited training opportunities for education administrators means that they have substantially lower levels of understanding of what such a programme entails and how it might benefit certain children (see Section 8.10.4). But further training is not wanted on a pragmatic basis. Analytically, continuing ignorance of specific childhood conditions and their related educational interventions is obscured and serves to position administrators to perform regulatory practices of governmental policies.

Administrators construct teams and panels in order to negotiate problematic issues in the statementing process, and this is constructed by them to be an equitable practice in order to secure equitable decisions for all children (see Section 8.12). But what these practices do in effect is to further obscure their ignorance and also to relinquish responsibility in decision-making. In this way, they are insulated from the sites of conflict that may arise. But, further, without taking ultimate responsibility for (perhaps wrong) decisions, administrators accede to the power relations of the system, becoming unwitting players in a game with very strict rules of conduct. In this way, children's educational and psychological disabilities are perpetuated and they remain pathologised.

The consequences of these practices are that, although school choice is rhetorically offered to parents, this is an illusion and children with motor disorders remain pathologised. By drawing on discourses of choice, legislation, negotiation and equity, administrators legitimate their actions, assured that they are performing their jobs to the best of their ability, but rather, by their discursive actions they are enlisting parents and children in their own oppression.

8.18 Critical reflection

This chapter has presented the emergent theory of the ways in which education administrators experience the decisions they make on behalf of children with motor disorders. The paradigm of axial coding was first presented (Fig 2), complemented by the central story line which served as a descriptive explanation of the preceding model. Subsequently, each condition as it relates to the core category has been explained. Quotations taken directly from the text have then served to illustrate the conditions as experienced by the respondents. The chapter has moved from a description of administrators' constructions through to a critical, analytical construction of the findings. It

is hoped that this theory has aided in an understanding of decision-making within the statementing process from the perspective of education administrators themselves.

It must be noted, however, that this theory is not complete. Within grounded theory, there is always the possibility of new data coming to light that might modify or extend the theory. However, it is necessary to cease data collection and analysis at an appropriate point in the sure and certain hope that further research will continue in its wake. This theoretical framework could also possibly have been strengthened or indeed much further evolved, should a greater number of participants have been willing and able to take part in the study.

In addition, by adopting a social constructionist perspective, (see Section 6.3.2), this theory must be read as a co-construction of the data and that other, equally acceptable, constructions by other researchers are possible. For example, a young, male, childless researcher may have constructed an entirely different theoretical framework due to lack of experience in child development, teaching or parenting.

The core category was constructed partly through my own implicit conception of what was happening in the data but which was also representative of administrators' main concerns, articulated through the language they used during the interviews. I struggled for some time during the analytic process in attempting to adequately identify and construct these main concerns. Initially the concept of 'counter-measuring' was uppermost in my mind as my respondents made repeated reference to countering against problematic issues which arise for them in their everyday work. However, this notion seemed a little vague and it was through discussion with my supervisor that this vague notion became clearer and developed further into 'conflict resolution'. So, in effect, the core category had been jointly constructed by myself, my supervisor and my respondents.

'Choice', commonly understood as having personal autonomy and freedom in the Western world, appears illusory within the language of education administrators. From their perspective, choice for parents consists of coercion towards the more powerful authority.

'Disability' is constructed by administrators as the present level of functioning of a child deemed to require a statement of need. There was little reference to children's abilities or

strengths, not what their future potential might be through the right educational approach and context. It appears that the language surrounding issues of disability have been couched in terms of both the medical and social models of disability.

Certain findings necessitate the need to take the analysis onto a deeper level that grounded theory could offer, those findings being generally associated with issues of power and the subject positions available to parents and education administrators within a discourse of 'choice'. The following chapter explains how this subsequent analysis proceeded.

CHAPTER 9
METHODOLOGY II:
PHASE II - FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter will present in detail phase two of the research. Initially, this second study was born out of the findings from phase one and was performed in order to address the second research question and this will first be explained. Secondly, definitions of 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis' will be posited. The chapter will then move on to evaluate the different discourse traditions available to social science researchers, justifying the choice of a Foucauldian method over others. Subsequently, advantages and limitations of the Foucauldian method will be discussed before finally presenting the discursive data/texts for analysis for phase two.

9.2 Theoretical concerns

Immersion in the data over a long period of time, constantly re-reading interview transcripts and theory building led me to identify strong discourses of 'choice' and 'power' within the area of SEN and the statementing process. Many aspects of 'choice' were embedded throughout the data. It became apparent to me that the constructionist grounded theory was extremely important in addressing the first research question (see Section 5.6), but the identified discourses of 'choice' and 'power' required a much broader and deeper perspective from which to address the second research question that could not be located within that particular method. Foucauldian Discourse analysis, on the other hand, required that I stand back from the minutiae of data and look instead to the broader canvass in order to fully understand and interpret what was going on and to consider the implications.

The discourses and constructions utilised by education administrators may, perhaps, like any group of individuals, be grounded in the historical, cultural and political genealogy or origin of that group of individuals. In other words, they perhaps have a tacit understanding of their positions within the LEA. It was therefore necessary to further examine their understanding of these positions, and the power and disciplinary practices enacted by

education administrators within a discourse of 'choice'. Further, these individuals' experiences and understandings and how they have been constructed may, of necessity, be closely linked to institutional policy and therefore, ultimately, be closely tied to the zeitgeist. Education administrators are viewed as positioned by, and a product of, the time in which they live. But how have they come to be so positioned? LEAs, as in the social welfare office, operate as a mechanism for disciplinary power (Moffatt, 1999), which has implications for subject positions, and the discourse analysis that follows in the following chapter seeks to explicate this notion.

Foucault has instigated a sense of unease about the disciplinary castles within which knowledge of the social world has been constructed (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). These authors suggest that within special education, Foucault's ideas have forced professionals to review the utility of their knowledge by which children's difficulties have come to be understood. When these difficulties are examined from a Foucauldian perspective, they appear in an entirely unique panorama.

The SEN administrator, working within an LEA, is required by the very nature of the work involved in SEN administration, to focus on the statementing process for many children who are grouped together under the rubric of SEN. These children form a very large heterogeneous group. This being so, the administrator may sometimes fail to acknowledge (or even deny) the individual child and their accompanying personal and educational need. Therefore, issues of subjectivity arise as administrators understand their work from different perspectives; as administrator, as team member or in public or private accounts (see Section 8.12.3), and it is important to explore these subjectivities further.

Discourse analysis offers a means of revealing (sometimes) unspoken and unacknowledged aspects of SEN administrators' working practices and also aspects of the constructed social positions which co-exist for those individuals. Discourse analysis, moreover, offers an alternative vision of the world of education in an attempt to make salient those more dominant discourses which, through their maintenance, result in the continued marginalisation of groups of individuals through the perpetuation of social power relationships. It is this perpetuation of a power nexus that is the focus of this analysis. It is hoped that an understanding of how power affects the discourse of 'choice' within SEN administration and the subsequent availability of subject positions within this highly

problematised field may serve to permit SEN administrators to resist simplifying the complexity of the statementing process by searching for supposedly equitable practices. This may result in a more purposeful approach with due merit paid to consideration of each individual child and less attention to disciplinary practices.

It has been argued that education administrators are generally in favour of mainstream schools for children with disabilities primarily because they work from a distance (Garvar-Pinhas and Schmelkin, 1989). These authors assert that SEN administrators also have less positive attitudes towards administrative concerns regarding their support role and understanding of these youngsters. This being so, an understanding of their own subjectivities might enable SEN administrators to take an alternative approach to decision-making, to view each child as an un-pathologised individual; to assess, statement and review in a more meaningful manner to the family concerned. Within this process, education administrators might be more able to clearly understand the child's appropriate educational and social psychological needs, thus leading to school placement considered by the child's parents to be the most suitable.

I initiated phase two of the research upon completion of phase one and focused on a Foucauldian discourse analysis to address the second and last research question,

2. How does power affect the discourse of 'choice' for parents seeking CE for their child?

The essence of this will be captured within an exploration of Foucauldian concepts with the field of special education as its focus. This perspective should enable previously taken-for-granted assumptions about educational administrative practices to be deconstructed: at the very least, to engender a critical perspective of such practices.

In order to fully complete the analysis, it was necessary to change the methodology to further explain the discourse of 'choice' found within the grounded theory analysis. It has been argued that using one set method restricts a full understanding of 'the complexity and multiplicity of meaning' (Parker, 1999:2), and also that there may be many ways of reading a text. In other words, in order to gain a complete critical analysis of educational choice, it is necessary to analyse the phenomenon from more than one perspective. The findings

from the grounded theory study, within the inter-relatedness of concepts, show how governmental and individual power may result in parents of children with motor disorders being denied their preferred choice of CE. Equally, the same may be said of parents of children with other identified SEN who also hold a preference for an alternative pedagogical experience for their child to that provided by mainstream school. The potential of a discourse analysis within this research lies in an exploration of the power relations that underpin education administration and its practice, and the subjectivities that it (re)produces. Such an analysis therefore sought to explicate the notions of both power-knowledge relationships and subject positioning for education administrators within the discourse of 'choice'.

9.3 Definitions - 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis'

There are many traditions in discourse research (Wetherell et al, 2001) but before I explain my choice of tradition, it is necessary to first define what is meant by both 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis' as different uses of the terms may at times cause methodological confusion.

Discourse has been defined in many ways. For example, Gergen (1985) defines discourse as a communal exchange, a social and cultural resource that people may draw upon to warrant or explain their activities and the activities of others. Those who understand discourse as a social or cultural resource are concerned with the performative and functional aspects of speech, therefore focus on the ways in which people construct individual versions of events through their use of language (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). The world is constructed, as they see it, according to their interests.

Conversely, Foucault defines discourses as productive - to quote a much-used phrase - 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Edley, 2001) and for Foucault, nothing meaningful exists outside of discourse. That is, phenomena do exist, but take on meaning only through discourse. Foucault's conception of discourse is more closely linked to materiality, knowledge and power than it is to language (Hook, 2001). Discourse, for Foucault, is not a linguistic system, rather an understanding of a discipline (for example, education) or a disciplinary institution (for example, LEAs).

Three major themes underscore Foucault's discursive approach to language: discourse, power/ knowledge, and the subject (Hall, 2001). Discourse, as viewed by Foucault, is defined as a group of events/statements/objects that represents knowledge about, or constructs, a particular topic - a discursive formation. Since all social practices entail meaning to some extent, and since meaning influences human conduct, then discourse constructs the topic (Hall, 2001): social reality is constructed through discourse.

Those who follow a Foucauldian definition of discourse might be more concerned with an historical (or genealogical) analysis of the development of specific forms of knowledge and the ways in which such knowledges construct phenomena (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999).

Discourse analysis, then, is an umbrella term for the many traditions in which discourse may be analysed, although such analyses would, of course, depend upon which definition of discourse is applied. Fundamentally, discourse analysis is a reconceptualisation of mainstream psychological assumptions which challenges cognitive notions of an objective reality (Wetherell et al, 2001), very much in line with a social constructionist critique (see Section 6.3.2).

9.4 Foucauldian discourse analysis - justification

Following a consideration of all the possible methods for analysing discourse (Wetherell et al, 2001), I decided a Foucauldian analysis would be the more appropriate option, as it is a social critique in that it examines inequalities of power in society (Hall, 1997). Of particular concern is how discourses have the power to legitimate and validate existing power structures, institutional practices and positions of privilege. Indeed, social policy, culture, social relations, subjectivity and identity were clearly areas in which Foucault was interested (Wetherell, 2001b).

Moreover, this thesis rejects an analysis based purely upon language (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and considers, in addition to language, the broader canvas of discourse texts, principally because the research sought to analyse discourses of power on both micro and macro levels. I do not intend to justify too strongly the use of discourse analysis as a research method, however, as it has been already argued that there has been 'a proliferation of the various models of the process of discourse analysis...[and]...a veritable explosion of

discursive analytic work' (Hook, 2001:521). It is now an accepted form of analysis within many disciplinary areas including contemporary psychological theory and research (Wetherell, 2001a). Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the method complements the previous constructionist grounded theory on epistemological grounds (see Section 6.5).

What was important for Foucault was that discourses are productive and constitutive. In other words, they have a certain ability to construct the objects of which they speak. This being accepted, then discourses of 'power' produce particular forms of power, and discourses of 'choice' in turn produce notions of choice as if they were real. In the context of this research, it could be argued that parents of children with SEN might consider their choice of school was a real choice, but the Foucauldian analysis to follow delineates the way in which power has infiltrated its way into the discourse and notion of 'choice' to make it appear real.

9.5 Advantages and limitations

A Foucauldian analysis is a deconstructive reading and critical interpretation of a problem or text and may not provide answers to that problem (Burr, 1995). However, what it offers instead is an understanding of the conditions underlying the problem and a realisation that the basic nature of the problem and its solution are both situated within its own assumptions. In making these assumptions explicit, a Foucauldian analysis enables the problem to be viewed from a different, more critical perspective from which a panoramic, comprehensive perspective of the problem can be achieved. In this way, such an analysis may reveal the power structures within institutional practices and subject positions being taken up and enacted by education administrators, although they may hitherto have been unaware of such. If necessary, they may then be acted upon.

A Foucauldian analysis is therefore applicable to any phenomenon or problem at any given time, and may lead to positive change in the practices of individuals, institutions, professions or society as a whole.

The relativism of discourse analysis makes it difficult to justify one reading of a text or a discourse as it cannot reveal a truth (Burr, 1995). Therefore discourse analysts must acknowledge that their analyses are open to other, equally valid, interpretations.

In addition, discourse analysis has methodological limitations. As with all critical theories, discourse analysis is not a hard science, since it is a deconstructive reading and critical interpretation or construction, and there are no strict guidelines for analysts to follow (Burr, 1995). But this accusation actually limits thinking and is considered by social constructionist writers as another form of hegemonic thinking and researching; that there are no strict guidelines may indeed be one of its strengths from a social constructionist perspective. As discourse analysis always remains a matter of interpretation, quality criteria with which it may be judged depend upon the logic and force of the analysis itself and should therefore not be judged by those retaining a strict allegiance to the hard sciences and experimental work of a quantitative nature. Parker (2003) asserts that,

> *'we've been a little too defensive about what we're doing and trying to fit what we're doing to the criteria that are used in laboratory or experimental psychology'.*

There are, and should be, alternatives to hard science (Leininger, 1994). (See also Section 11.4).

Hook (2001) also shows how discourse analysts may open themselves up to the possibility that their critiques will become subjected to critique themselves. They may become part of the instruments of the discourses they are attempting to critique, 'more a product of contemporary discourse than a critical analysis of it' (p.535). To counter this, Hook (2001) contends that analysts must move beyond the text to search for the macro conditions under which discourses operate. Discourse analysts should attempt to engage with the discourse rather than provide simply a mere reading of the text. Foucault offers ways to move beyond the text in terms of acknowledging the materiality and embodiment that all discourses create and support. A variety of data sources would exemplify the complex nature of discourses and how they are evidenced.

9.6 Discursive data/texts for analysis

Foucault argued that any site for analysis must be the present (Marshall, 1990) and therefore any analysis must take into account contemporary forms of data in order to examine the present. Three sources of data were used for this phase of the research:

- transcribed interviews
- participant observation notes
- document analysis

9.6.1 Transcribed interviews

Although the constructionist grounded theory phase of the research relied entirely upon transcribed interviews as data, these transcripts were also applicable and readily available for phase two. But more so, I made use of data within the transcripts that was not drawn upon for the grounded theory analysis.

9.6.2 Participant observation notes

I considered it necessary when applying a Foucauldian analysis to gain a feel for the materiality and embodiment of the working practices of education administrators, gained through participant observation of one LEA. I gained access to the LEA following a productive interview with one particular respondent, who upon request invited me to spend one morning in an office-based environment of the LEA.

Participant observation requires firsthand involvement of the researcher in the social world of the object of the study (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). By observing in this way, personal reflections and insights gained through experiencing administrators' surroundings enabled me to add further support to the discourse analysis. The observation was planned to be a snapshot glimpse of the LEA rather than a prolonged process. In this manner, my involvement would be perfunctory and I would be able to observe rather than participate.

I made extensive notes during participant observation and considered them a vital part in this analysis (Appendix VI). I recorded detailed activities, interactions and workload within the LEA, as well as events and discussions related to school choice. I also made notes on space allocation, and also drew a diagram (later described) of both the office and interview room in which parents are sometimes interviewed. Staff relationships, disagreements, commonalities and the hierarchical structure of the workforce were all considered. I also took note of individuals' reactions to being observed (for example, was this an observation or an intrusion?).

9.6.3 Document analysis

As Foucault stressed the importance of statements in both creating and sustaining discourse, the data also consisted of document analysis. The particular document to be analysed was the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DES, 2001), as this document specifically addresses the issue of school choice and parental participation in the statementing process, referring specifically to governmental initiatives and prescriptive rules for individuals (education administrators) who should work to its principles.

All three forms of data will be drawn upon to illustrate Foucauldian concepts as the analysis develops.

9.7 Procedure for analysis

Discourse researchers advocate different methods for analysing discourse from a Foucauldian perspective, subsequently creating problems for novice analysts in terms of there being no one definitive method. For example, Parker (1992) identifies twenty steps in the Foucauldian analysis of discourse, providing a thorough guide through initial identification of texts to the political and social implications of discourse and how power relations are reproduced in texts. These comprehensive steps focus also on the historical origins of discourses and their relationships with institutional power and ideology. Parker, however, denies these steps constitute a method, per se (Parker, 1992:5), and argues for resisting any such method.

Kendall and Wickham (1999), although delineating fewer steps in the process, provide guides to archaeological and genealogical analyses albeit with the presupposition of a deep conceptual understanding. Willig (1999) offers six steps in the Foucauldian analysis of discourse demonstrating how the construction of objects and subjects within discourse are achieved in texts and addressing implications of this for subjectivity and practice. However, this method relates to the direct analysis of a piece of text, and ignores the more fundamental precepts of Foucauldian theory, those of power/knowledge, historicity and governmentality, ignoring also the broader 'tissues of meaning' (Parker, 1992:7) that make up a particular discourse.

Likewise, Hall (2001) covers the basic concepts of Foucauldian analysis in easy steps, but does not include the issue of power that is at stake within the research reported here. Carabine (2001) also presents a guide to genealogical analysis conducted in a Foucauldian vein, giving broad and basic instructions. However, there is no evidence of specific Foucauldian concepts - power/knowledge, historicity and subjectivity are lacking in this presentation.

However, notwithstanding these methods, or ways to approach a discourse analysis, it has been argued that analysts may adopt their own methodological procedures, those which are guided by the specific topic, research question and point of focus, providing the analyst explains their detailed and thorough procedure with justification for their choices (Taylor, 2001b). Subsequently, after examining the variety of possible methods of doing a Foucauldian analysis, I decided the best way forward would be to utilise Foucauldian concepts of disciplinary power (see Section 10.3) and panopticism (see Section 10.4). In so doing, I was able to construct an analysis that I saw as highly relevant to the SEN system in answering the second research question which was explicitly concerned with issues of power and subjectivity.

9.8 Critical reflection

Within this chapter I have suggested that the positions occupied by education administrators need to be examined (see Section 9.2). However, this inherently positions me as the more powerful examiner, in that I am exerting my privilege as an academic. My own position is not without cause for concern; indeed I should call into question my own ideological vulnerabilities.

It seems that I have become victim to Hook's (2001) warning in that I have positioned myself as a product of the discourse of 'choice' as, although attempting to provide a critical analysis of such, I have frequently returned to my own position as advocate of freedom of choice throughout the research. Even though I have, throughout the research process, tried to engage with the discourse of 'choice' by moving beyond the texts to read the wider context within which the discourse is situated and operational (economic and market force approach to special education), I sometimes return to my own Westernised ideals of what 'choice' means. I explicitly construct 'choice' as the traditional, hegemonic

and commonly accepted conceptualisation of autonomy and free will. I am thus positioned by and also a product of the discourse of 'choice'.

Theoretically, this serves to support the Foucauldian way of theorising about discourses, in that they may indeed be powerful mechanisms of discipline. Dominant discourses, such as Western notions of autonomy, hold sway even in the light of critical analysis. It is difficult to find and adopt a position whereby such discourses may be challenged and overcome, sometimes because of individual circumstances and life experiences, but also because such powerful discourses need to be replaced by an equally powerful one that is believable in its applicability to the individual or to society. What remains is that power deeply infuses everything around us to the extent that the discourse of 'choice' serves to reinforce the limited range of options available rather than providing resources for changing macro conditions in any substantial form.

CHAPTER 10
THE PANOPTIC STRUCTURE OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: A FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

10.1 Introduction

The analysis to follow will seek to unmask the governmentality within mechanisms of disciplinary power operating within the panoptic special education system and explore the manner in which disciplinary power affects choice for parents who request CE for their child. The analysis will also be concerned with issues of subjectivity. For example, administrators working in SEN administration within LEAs operate within a disciplinary mechanism and engage in active self-surveillance and self-control, and this has implications for subjectivity, both for administrators and parents alike. The analysis will suggest that, although disciplinary power offers little sites for resistance, the actions of some parents in the exercise of choice are seen to challenge the power of the panopticon, but it remains to be seen just how resistant it will become in the face of such opposition.

10.2 Rationale

Foucault's deconstructionist aim was to uncover the genealogy of social formations (for example, an academic discipline, the prison, or sexuality), to explore the subjectivities they induce and the form of social control they institute (Foucault, 1977). In particular, Foucault argued that the analysis of social welfare decisions should explore in detail how choices are made, and how these decisions are justified, with regard to individuals' well-being (Foucault, 1988). In other words, the different constructions that influence these decisions should be explored. I suggest that the same argument applies to educational decisions, as LEAs may be seen to operate as mechanisms of disciplinary power (Moffatt, 1999), and just as individuals' well-being is of importance in social welfare decisions, so too are they important in educational decisions. This analysis shows how the special education system enacted by education administrators within LEAs is particularly concerned with disciplinary power and the subjectivities it creates.

10.3 Governmentality and disciplinary power

Foucault identified certain knowledges, including those concerned with education, and the practices which accompany them, which he saw as central to the normalisation of social actions and social institutions (Ball, 1990). Over the years, Foucault analysed many models of humanity that have developed as a result of historical changes. The creation of special education and the accompanying practice of segregation, according to Foucault, has the result of stigmatising and normalising children's abilities (Ball, 1990). Special education also has the function of objectifying the subject (the child) through the process of classification and division, a process referred to by Foucault as dividing practices (Ball, 1990), which are inherently involved in systems of governmentality.

As Governments came to accept responsibility for economy in the sixteenth century, and to order the lives of individuals in every aspect of society, centralised administrative structures took on a will to knowledge (Kenway, 1990) and created archives of statistical details of individuals' lives. In this manner, a powerful means of surveillance and regulation was born. The human and social sciences aided in this through the provision of methods, data collection and knowledge (Rose, 1989; 1998). This may still be evidenced today in statements issued by Government ministers. For example, David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, stated in 2000 that social science research should provide the basis for policy-making, to inform the most effective initiatives (DfEE, 2000).

The dawning of governmentality and subsequent objectification of the human body in this way resulted in other forms of power such as disciplinary power enacted by what Foucault referred to as disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1977). Within the human and social sciences, experts, professionals and specialists produce and promote certain regimes of truth and act as judges of normality (Rose, 1989, 1998; Kenway, 1990). This may be seen in the special education system in which judges of normality are those individuals charged with constructing reports based on the child's current educational difficulties or inabilities.

A certain bio-power emerged in which the human body became subjected to observation and regulation, practiced in such institutions as prisons, hospitals and schools. Thus the aim of disciplinary power was to construct docile bodies that may be subjected, used, transformed and therefore improved. McKinlay and Starkey (1998) referred to this as the

construction of obedient bodies. This disciplinary power is strongest and most efficient when it operates through administrative rules and its success stems from the use of simple instruments: hierarchical observation, normalising judgements, and their combination in a specific procedure - the examination (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault (1977:184) stated that the examination combines,

> *'the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgement. It is a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them'.*

The examination finds its counterpart, in the context of this research, in the assessment and statementing process for children who, for whatever reason, cannot or do not adhere to the norm in an educational sense. The assessment and statementing process inherently individualises, differentiates and judges children and their abilities.

How disciplinary power was, and is still, achieved may be found in Foucault's analysis of the panopticon as an illustration or paradigm of the surveillance, regulation and ultimate governmentality of individuals (Foucault, 1977). But first it is important to clarify disciplinary power in order to understand how the special education system can be viewed in terms of a panoptic structure.

Contrary to Foucault's notion of sovereign power (Foucault, 1977) by which power is hierarchical and plainly visible, disciplinary power is a form of power that is diffuse: it is all encompassing, acting on everyone, and its constantly operating nature means that its effects are limitless. It acts swiftly and lightly but in such a subtle manner as to make it efficient, invisible and almost impossible to resist. Disciplinary power affects all aspects of individual and societal life, subjecting each and every person to constant surveillance (Covaleskie, 1993). Society and its individuals are therefore visible to and controlled by an impersonal and invisible disciplinary gaze. In summarising the totalising effect of disciplinary power, Covaleskie (1993:2) states that this lies 'precisely in its universal potentiality, combined with the impossibility of verifiability'.

Since it is impossible to verify, resistance is substantially thwarted and its invisibility allows no sites at which to direct contestations. Disciplinary power is all embracing yet intangible and may be viewed in direct relation to Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of the panopticon.

10.4 Panopticism

The panopticon was an eighteenth century architectural structure designed by Jeremy Bentham, usually a prison, in which the organisation of space and human beings within that space made explicit the deployment of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977).

The principle upon which the panopticon was constructed was that an outside (periphetic) ring was divided into discrete individual cells and encompassed a central watchtower. Each cell was inhabited by a lone prisoner, with a guard occupying the central watchtower. This structure enabled inmates to be constantly observed by the guard. Carefully positioned windows and back lighting enabled the guard to view the inmates without the inmates observing the guard. In this way, the inmates could never be sure of the presence of the guard and would begin to police their own behaviour.

Bentham conceived the idea of the panopticon primarily for the observation of convicts and paupers, but it also came to be seen as a solution to problems of social governance and control in society – a way of managing students, asylum inmates and workers (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998). Indeed, Foucault showed how schools, hospitals and factories all resemble prisons in terms of the ways in which regulation, control and panoptic principles are all paramount in their functioning (Foucault, 1977). He describes the aim of the panopticon thus,

> *'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers...Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must*

> *never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so'* (Foucault, 1977:201).

Over the course of time, the possibility of being constantly observed leads individuals to internalise this surveillance which, in turn, reduces the need for an ever watchful eye so that surveillance is accepted and taken for granted (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998). People begin to police their own thoughts and behaviours - a powerful yet subtle system of social control.

10.4.1 The special education panopticon

SEN administrators within the LEA have the task of helping to manage children's lives and helping to control the efficient running of the education system. Children become the responsibility also of a large body of specialists, teachers, psychologists, medical doctors, paediatricians and so forth, who have over the years developed a body of knowledge and accompanying discourses with which to explain children's abilities and disabilities. These discourses have been constructed though the creation of technical categories of disabilities into which individual children must be fitted or allocated, for example, learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or dyspraxia. Such allocation of children to technical categories may not be guided by the child's objective state, however, rather the need for professionals to locate them is what drives the special education system. It follows from this that the construction and maintenance of technical categories of disabilities is further strengthened by the technical and functional language employed by administrators within the LEA. Such language distinguishes between children, between the educationally normal child and the child that does not conform to the norm.

This analysis therefore proposes that the British special education system, as with all institutional power relationships, is heavily influenced by eighteenth century reforms of punishment and control and may be directly compared with a panoptic structure or system. Each individual under examination within a panoptic structure, be it a material structure or an intangible concept, is constantly visible to the guard, supervisor, officer, or decision-maker, and through the document archive, each individual is necessarily and thoroughly individualized. The mechanism of surveillance is seen to be captured within the assessment and statementing process, which instills disciplinary techniques within children, their parents and education administrators. According to Foucault (1979), the panopticon is a

mechanism that ensures the most efficient expression of power relations; and so it is with the special education system.

Self-surveillance and self-control are important Foucauldian concepts, and the notion of internalisation may be evidenced within the LEA. There is constant pressure upon education administrators to be mindful of performance indicators, league tables and outcomes in respect of OFSTED inspections. The interview data strongly support this,

> *'performance indicators, best value, measurement of performance - the bane of my life'* (LEA3, 548-549),

> *'I'm fed up with providing them figures for this that and the other. Oh, can I have this year's figures for, you know, and I'm asked for figures for this, figures for that, do something on the performance review, do something on best value, I've got this performance assessment for the whole council. We've got OFSTED, we've got OFSTED action plan, we've got special needs development plan, we've got behaviour support plan, the education development plan. You name it, we've got it. We're now into investors in people, it's madness, and it's, most of my time now is spent on issues that I didn't even think were in my job description, let alone, you know, things that I should be working on, and that's the way it is. It's getting worse. And we are moving away from I think what the focus should be. The focus is, let's get the provision sorted, let's get the kids sorted'* (LEA3, 1303-1313),

> *Q: 'Could that be because they're* [other administrators] *focused more on performance indicators, you know, 'I've got to fill in all my little boxes'?*
> *A: Most definitely, yes. Most definitely, yes. Yes, performance is a major issue. Yes, we are monitored'* (LEA8, 1358-1362).

Working to demand is eventually internalised as administrators constantly modify their actions, interactions and negotiations with parents in order to maintain good scores within these performance indicators (see also Chapter Eight). Here the psychological implications and issues of subjectivity arise, but these will be addressed later. How does the panoptic system of SEN position individuals within its structure and process? There are two ways in which this may be viewed.

During the process of statementing, a child is under constant surveillance from the expert decision-makers and it may be seen that, first, children and/or their parents are positioned within the periphery of the panopticon, with education administrators situated within the central watchtower. Vital to the special education system's panoptic function is that children (but more often, rather, the child's parents) are aware of the surveillance and

aware also that it operates continuously and constantly. Hence the continuous and constant reassessment of the child in the form of annual reviews in which further documentation is generated and archived, exercising further the strength of the power-knowledge relation. As in the case of the panoptic prison, in which the inmates are aware they are being watched but do not know exactly when, in what manner or by whom (Foucault, 1977), this is so for the child (and parents) within the special education system. Teachers, educational psychologists and SEN co-ordinators watch over and monitor the child on a daily basis, and reports are compiled by those experts involved in the statementing process, sometimes invisible or unnoticed by those the matter directly concerns.

Second, it can also be seen that special education administrators within the LEA may also be placed within the periphery of the panopticon, as they too are under surveillance by higher authorities, as the data they collect and the decisions they make are under constant review. These higher authorities take the form of heads of SEN teams and Directors of Education who ultimately compile statistical data and reports on the efficiency of workers in the form of LEA league tables and performance indicators. Such higher authorities would, of necessity, be situated within the central watchtower of the panopticon. But the data show how there are sites of contestation within this system and resistance does not come from parents alone (see Section 10.6).

Situated within the periphery of the panoptic structure or system, both parents and administrators are therefore individualised and visible to the surveillance of an ever-watchful eye (parents visible to the administrators, and administrators visible to the higher authorities of the Director of Education, OFSTED, central Government). This form of surveillance was also captured and may be illustrated by the way in which the SEN office has been designed, and participant observation notes describe how power operates spatially within the office (see Appendix VI).

In particular, most administrators within the observed SEN team are housed in the same small office, with a relatively small gap in hierarchical positions, but with the inclusion of a SEN manager seated at the head of the room, the desk faced so as to maintain full visibility of the workers. The office comprises five statementing officers, two clerical support workers, as well as the manager. The panopticon's function is to ensure that individuals are aware of being constantly under surveillance, and the manager's location

exemplifies this surveillance. The SEN manager was described to the observer as being an intermediary between the administrators and the Head of SEN (who is located in a separate office in the building), and so surveillance certainly has a strong presence within this office. The SEN manager works at the desk at the head of the room, but administrators are not aware of what work is being done, so they do not know whether they, themselves, are being surreptitiously observed,

> *'in the periphetic ring, one is totally seen without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen'* (Foucault, 1977:202).

The desks of the workers are arranged around the periphery of the office, all facing inwards towards each other. There is very little space in which to move between the desks. This use of space was interpreted as a means to ensure the efficient running of the department by housing all administrators in the same location, disregarding the physical needs of the workers. However, the architectural design and facilities afforded the administrators are viewed in stark contrast to those afforded parents who (if necessary) are interviewed in a separate room. The administrators' office is equipped with the necessary paraphernalia to carry out their duties: a personal computer with printer, a telephone, filing cabinets and a footstool to ensure their physical comfort (all of this in contrast to limited space in which to move about). This enables them to access information on their clients at a glance. Pot plants and colourful posters adorn free space.

However, the interview room is designed so as to maintain limited contact between the two parties, being very small in relation to the administrators' office, with sufficient space only to house a desk and three chairs, one chair for the interviewer and the other two for the parent(s) being interviewed. The desk separates the two parties; the distribution of bodies defines the principle of power. The walls are bare of adornment. Crucially, parents have no access to information. Parents are therefore seen but do not see; they are the possible objects of data collection but are not active subjects of decision-making. This creates space wherein the administrator/parent dyad may exhibit a power imbalance, the administrator being the more powerful by being the questioner, the parents exercising less power by answering these questions and, presumably, having to justify their answers.

The superior strength and primary effect of the panopticon lies in its ability to observe without being observed, thereby creating an imbalance in the dyadic relationship between education administrators and parents, both parties having unintentionally internalised the mechanism of surveillance. The result of this may be evidenced in the exasperation and frustration experienced by some parents who cannot seem to grasp the fundamental meaning behind certain administrative practices and decisions,

> *'very often they have a story to tell particularly about parents, based on frustration'* (LEA7, 334-335),
>
> *'we're used to disgraces in education in this country you know and people just put up with it'* (LEA5, 670-671).

Inadvertently, by 'just putting up with it', they have become engaged in the power relationship so that they exercise their own subjection (Foucault, 1977).

There is one main feature of this panoptic system, a feature that illustrates clearly how the special education system works. On the one hand, children are individualised within the statementing process. Children are, in effect, decontextualised and ahistorical; they are taken (metaphorically) from the context of their family, surrounded by a host of professionals and authorities, and positioned as an objectified subject for analysis in terms of assessment and examination. This creates an effect that serves to minimise the interests of the child. Yet on the other hand, contemporary educational decision-making purports to aim for equity in resource allocation (see Sections 3.4 and 8.12.1), and to treat all children equally but on the basis of need and in the light of available resources. Children are therefore both individualised and totalised.

Within local Government practice, children's details are collected and centralised from birth and taken forward to aid in the establishment of appropriate school placement as determined by education authorities. More specifically, the statementing process for children identified as needing additional or special resources incorporates a huge element of data collection during which the child is heavily scrutinised. The statementing process, like any examination (McIntosh, 2002), creates an archive of knowledge and documentation about a child, placing the child within a field of surveillance and as an object within that network of documentation. Assessment reports, a statement of SEN,

individual education plans, annual assessments, therapy programmes, medical consultation notes, and video and photographic evidence, all combine to create this network of documentation which fixes the child as an object of surveillance. This would appear to be highly illustrative of the power-knowledge relationship, described by Foucault thus,

> *'power and knowledge directly imply one another;...there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'* (Foucault, 1977:27).

The knowledge gained aids in constructing a network of power relations. The child identified as having SEN is therefore placed in a perpetual state of examination within this field of power, and objectification and domination of the child may result from this. Domination also reaches out to place children in a school that is in keeping with the dictates and mechanism of the disciplinary power operating within the special education panopticon.

Within this system, education administrators take on the role of expert and maneuver parents, steering them in the direction of particular educational settings, usually in terms of mainstream schools (see Section 8.8.2). This is because administrators have subjected themselves more to the wishes of their political superiors, rather than hearing and acting upon parents' opinions and preferences.

The judges of normality may be evidenced in the privilege afforded by education administrators to educational psychologists' reporting during the statementing process, for they inherently make value judgements of what resources the child may require. Although the ultimate decision again rests with the administrators within the LEA, it has been evidenced that any decision rests upon the report of the educational psychologist, that report being inherently more influential and privileged than others. The data show evidence of this,

> *'we will have a quick look through the advice, we'll normally look at the bottom line of the ed psych report'* (LEA3, 550-552),
>
> *'yes, I would say that out of everybody's report, probably the educational psychologist's report is the one that people take most notice of'* (LEA6, 561-563),

> *'I'm an educational psychologist and I've done a report bang up to date and here we are, the child's got severe difficulties'* (LEA7, 286-287).

Parents are able (indeed they are encouraged) to provide input in the statementing process, but ultimately, parents' choices fade in the light of professionals' input,

> *'we've always argued that we can complete an assessment without parental advice'* (LEA3, 569-570).

The notion of parental involvement, in this respect, would seem to be a dubious one with hierarchical power here being incorporated into disciplinary power. Power comes from disallowing parents a voice in the assessment process.

Further on during the statementing process, parents are given the opportunity to state their preference for the school in which they would like their child to be educated. Part 4 of the statement refers to the school placement deemed appropriate to fulfill the child's educational needs, and it is here that parents are included in the process of statementing by being explicitly required to state their preference. This 'choice' of school placement is an assumed one however, and parents are allowed only to state their preference. The COP (DES, 2001) shows that the notice issued to parents accompanying a proposed statement contains the following information pertaining to choice of school,

> *'we have left part 4 blank so that you can tell us where you think [child's name] should be educated. You can tell us which maintained [local education authority] school, including an LEA-maintained special school, you would like [child's name] to go to and tell us the reasons. To help you decide, a list of all the maintained [primary/secondary] schools in the area is attached'* (DES, 2001:179).

The name of the school proposed by the parents should then (notwithstanding some provisos) be named by the LEA on the final statement. Of central importance in this paragraph is the reference to LEA maintained schools, and parents are asked to state their preference for a locally managed school. The image of the panopticon is clear to see here. If individuals are made to ''want' what the system needs in order to perform well' (Lyotard, 1986:62), then the disciplinary power illustrated within this notice, in its statement about choice of mainstream or special schools, is at its best. LEAs need parents to opt for a school under their own management – this saves time, effort, expense and the possible ensuing legal battle resulting from a choice of a non-maintained or independent

school. In stating their preference for a school, the concept of governmentality involves the active consent and subjugation of parents rather than their oppression or domination per se, but in steering parents in the direction of mainstream schools, the ultimate effect is oppression. In other words, what appears to be a liberal act whereby the Government promotes 'parental choice' is really the exact opposite.

Yet although education administrators sometimes coerce parents into choosing a mainstream school within state management (see Section 8.8.2), they do not have overall and final control in deciding on a child's school placement, as contestations may be directed towards the SEN tribunal. This feature will be explored in terms of parental resistance to the disciplinary power of the panopticon (see Section 10.6).

In some cases, parents demonstrate a preference for a school that does not lie within the control of the LEA. For children with motor disorders, this might be NICE where the child may receive a more specific pedagogy and rehabilitation programme relevant to the child's needs than that which might be expected within a mainstream or special school. In such cases, the notice accompanying the proposed statement goes on to state that,

> *'if you think that [child's name] should attend a non-maintained special school or an independent school you can suggest the name of a school and tell us why you think that school should be named in [child's name] statement. A list of non-maintained special schools and independent schools approved by the Secretary of State [and if such a list is produced by the National Assembly of Wales] and the National Assembly of Wales is attached to help you'* (DES, 2001:180).

Such a statement captures the disciplinary power of the panopticon. A list of schools approved by the Secretary of State is given to parents who are then allowed to choose from these schools. However, such a list presupposes the adequacy of the list and the schools therein, and power necessarily resides with central Government which has compiled the list. In choosing an independent school, such a placement would place a greater than usual financial burden upon LEAs. But coupled with this greater financial burden comes a certain loss of state control. The disciplinary power of the special education panopticon is perpetuated when parents subject themselves to its control. But when there is evidence of dissent or resistance to such control, that is the point at which power may be more evidently experienced, becoming sovereign or hierarchical power rather than disciplinary

power, and the point at which real choice becomes an issue for both parties. The result of this is sometimes an entrenched battle between parents and LEAs,

> *'the position we're in all the time is battling, battling for things, battling for services for parents, battling with the school, you know, with the LEA, battling with other services'* (LEA2, 336-337).

Both of the above statements from the COP (DES, 2001:179 and 180) demand that parents provide reasons for and justify their choice of school. Parents of children who do not need a statement do not usually need to justify their choice of school during the routine application to the LEA for school entry. Yet they too are sometimes not granted the school of their choice for various reasons and tribunals do occur. But the main point here is that these parents do not have to justify their choice initially. So why do parents of children who need a statement particularly need to do so? From a critical perspective, they need to do so for one primary reason.

Just as Foucault argued that the penal system constructed the criminal in the eighteenth century (Foucault, 1977), so the social science disciplines have constructed the disabled child in the twentieth century. The disabled child is viewed as dependent upon society to meet his or her needs. These children, due to the specific nature of their SEN, typically become dependent upon the state to provide support for their educational needs, and their parents must therefore be subjected to Government surveillance and disciplinary techniques of power in order for this to happen. Dependent individuals are pathologised (Billington, 1996; 2000; 2002) and have been defined by some as an inherent flaw within contemporary Western civil society (Fraser and Gordon, 1994). For this reason, because they transgress the norms of independence and autonomy of society and also, sometimes, because they challenge the governmental drive towards inclusion (see Section 8.8.1), they must be held accountable; they must be scrutinised; they must justify themselves and their choices. More importantly, they must enter the panoptic structure represented by the special education system.

So a relationship between disability and social deviance has been suggested, understood by reference to many disabled people's freedom from social obligations and responsibilities (Barnes and Oliver, 1993). Because contemporary society is founded upon ideals about individual responsibility, independence and freedom, such freedom from social

responsibilities should be discouraged. During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, people with disabilities were systematically excluded from the workplace and mainstream and economic life, as they were unable to conform to the disciplinary power of the factory (Foucault, 1977), and subsequently incarcerated in institutions. Kitchen (1998) argues that the dominant group's practices have always been promoted as the norm and henceforth people with disabilities have been portrayed as deviant, have been taught to know their place and that they must accept their exploitation within spatially constructed exclusionary practices.

10.5 Subjectivities...

Foucault was highly contentious and radical in his conception of human consciousness. Contrary to received notions that humans have a 'psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness' (Foucault, 1977:29), Foucault argued that the soul is,

> *'correlative of a certain technology of power over the body...[the soul] exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by a functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished - and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects...this soul...is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint'* (Foucault, 1977:29).

In other words, power over the body creates a soul which has the effect of profound subjection, that of bringing a person into being in many, sometimes contradictory, ways.

Within a discourse of school choice, many types of people are spoken about and, within each subject position that has been constructed, certain ways of being, ways of talking, ways of acting and rights associated with these features are made available for individuals to accept, contest or reject. Many subject positions may be found, for example, in Schedule 27 of the 1996 Education Act (DfE, 1996). The Schedule is here set out in full and the available subject positions appear in bold,

> *'**parents** may express a preference for the maintained school they wish **their child** to attend, or make representations for a placement in any other school. LEAs must comply with a parental preference unless the school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or the placement would be incompatible with the efficient education of the **other children** with whom the child would be educated, or with the efficient use of resources. LEAs must consider parental representations and arrange any meeting(s) with **LEA advisers or officers** the parents seek, before issuing the final statement'* (DES, 2001:107).

Within this documented text, there is evidence of subject positions of 'parents', 'their child', 'other children' and 'LEA advisers or officers'. So the discourse of school choice makes available spaces for subject positions for individuals to inhabit, each subject depending upon other subjects to maintain their position. The subject position of 'their child' is constructed and maintained only in relation to adults, in this case their 'parents' and 'LEA advisers or officers'. The subject position of 'other children' exists only in relation to 'their child'. Similarly, 'parents' as subjects are so positioned only in relation to 'their child'. More importantly, 'LEA advisers or officers' exist as subject positions strictly in relation to all three other subject positions, 'parents', 'their child' and 'other children'. If the latter three subject positions did not exist, then neither would the former - there would be no reason for their existence.

However, when other data are examined, there is evidence of a multiplicity of subject positions within a discourse of 'choice', primarily those individuals who have a closer involvement with 'their child', all deemed to be superior to the (weaker) subject positions,

'educational psychologist and three members of staff, the SENCo, the head of year, the form tutor, who is also a special needs teacher as well, a learning mentor' (LEA1, 529-531),

'not just educational professionals, but other professionals, the health visitor' (LEA2, 303-304),

'educational psychologists, educational welfare officers, the SENSS team which is special educational needs support service' (LEA6, 14-15),

'...head teachers, psychologists, medical professionals, educational welfare...child and adolescent from the health service' (LEA8, 268-269),

'physiotherapists, specialist teachers, educational psychologists' (LEA9, 311-312).

Notably amongst these individuals are 'educational psychologists', once more demonstrating the privileging effect of their status as professionals.

Modern modes of government, those of disciplinary power, have the effect of establishing individuals as self-managing (Rose, 1996). Psychological implications arise as a product of disciplinary power in that there may be several subject positions or subjectivities that are

available. The targets of disciplinary power are those individuals or groups of individuals to whom its effects are applied. Those affected by the disciplinary power of the special education panopticon might be anywhere in the system as those who supervise are themselves supervised, but in the context of this analysis this applies to parents of children with SEN and education administrators.

10.5.1 ...of parents

The discourse of a market force approach to education (see Section 3.3) constructs a new identity for parents, that of the consumer or purchaser of goods and/or services. In this new identity, parents are expected to take responsibility for their child with a disability and understand that inclusion is the best way forward, as inclusion is one of the most dominant discourses in contemporary educational policies and practices.

Central to the statementing process is that parents are required to state their preference for a school for their child. At this point, in the very act of choosing, parents are made to act as individuals in the expression of their preferences. This is assuming that the parents had not previously contributed their opinions of their child's needs within the assessment process; if they had, this would necessarily have occurred earlier. This statement of preference then fixes parents' locations for future reference. If they choose a mainstream school or a school that has been recommended to them by the LEA, they are defined as individuals who conform to what the establishment requires of them. Alternatively, parents become the subjects of a force to be reckoned with if they have stated their preference for a school outside state control, for example, NICE. Importantly, in the act of choosing, parents are now highly visible within the disciplinary mechanism of the special needs system.

The discourse of educational choice creates subject positions for parents and to speak at all is therefore to speak from this subject position. Parents may speak, but they are operating within the limits of the regime of truth within special education. They are positioned as both parent and consumer within a structure of rights and obligations. Parents are caught up in the discourse of rights not necessarily of their making but are obliged to act in the best interests of their child - they must seek advice and follow prescriptions. The system benefits and administrators are advantaged: disciplinary power is maintained. In the act of choosing, there are limited opportunities for speaking. If parents opt for a mainstream school, then parents are being relatively inactive, participating in the disciplinary

mechanism of the contemporary SEN system, having been subjected to the discourse of inclusion.

If however, they choose NICE, which explicitly contests the current system, then they are overtly acting against and challenging the discourse of inclusion and contesting the disciplinary mechanisms of the special education panopticon; they are ultimately resisting the machinery of governmentality. Those who fail to adhere to the rules are disciplined. The statement is not finalised and parents must enter the process of arbitration or appeal to the SEN tribunal. For many parents, this is fraught with conflict, frustration, expense and, of course, the possibility of losing their case.

10.5.2 ...of education administrators

Education administrators are also visible in this process and they are constrained in their subjectivities by perpetual surveillance. They are required (by law) to seek parental school preference and are therefore made to act in a certain way in perpetuating disciplinary mechanisms and strategies of oppression by way of a push towards mainstream school. On occasion of parental dissent in stating a preference for a non-maintained or independent special school (for example, NICE), administrators attempt to enforce the dictates of their superiors and require that parents justify their decisions, without, in essence, any call to accede to their requests.

However, alternative subjectivites are always possible. For example, administrators need not necessarily act as puppets of governmental control. Instead, they may take on other positions from which to act, but essentially, there are two subject positions or ways of being from which education administrators may speak; first, the position of local authority spokesperson for central Government and, second, the position of rebel or mutineer when they are seen to challenge the disciplinary power of the SEN panopticon from within its own walls. This resistance will be discussed further (see Section 10.6).

In this situation, all individuals are subjecting themselves to disciplinary power in one form or another. The administrator is subjected to performing as expected by higher authorities and the parents in turn are subjected to the gaze of the administrator. However, it has been suggested that there are occasions in which this power imbalance may be overturned.

Disciplinary power and the exercise of choice is not exclusive to the realm of the LEA, rather is embedded within society as a whole. The LEA is just one site of emergence or context out of many in which the notion of choice emerges. One may witness disciplinary power in which choice is exercised (or not) in various other domains, for example in employment, in economics, in politics. Disciplinary power is silent and subtle, but at its strongest point, there will always be resistance and where choice is limited, resistance is strong.

10.6 Resistance

Foucault (1977) asserted that power is automatic within the panopticon and that anyone may be placed anywhere within the system without affecting its mechanism of power. However, Moffatt (1999:229) analysed the social welfare system in terms of a panopticon and showed how some workers within the social welfare office sometimes make concerted attempts to disrupt or counterbalance the effects of the panopticon by developing their own strategies of power. For example, a social worker could make a decision that deliberately has an effect of disqualifying a client from receiving benefit when the client should ordinarily qualify. Moreover, a worker may make a personal judgement and decision to act as advocate of the client, an action which might serve to ensure that an incompetent client receives assistance. This shows how personal judgements in decision-making may contribute to counterbalancing the power effects of a panoptic system, the function of which may be to fundamentally offset any sites of tension or conflict within their work (see Section 8.5). However, notwithstanding these attempts to counterbalance the mechanism of power from within, the panopticon may remain wholly unchallenged, these efforts having implications only for the psychological subjectivities of its agents.

Power is always dynamic and its relations appear to shift within LEAs. Within SEN teams of administrators, tasks are often uncertain and ambiguous as each child or case is inherently different from others with particular learning needs that must be addressed. Sometimes, agreement of problem definitions (and particularly their solutions) requires extensive, active communication and negotiation between administrators (see Section 8.12). In addition to this, the client/service-provider relationship takes on a special significance to administrators; solutions to problems need to be accepted by parents in order to achieve a satisfactory course of action and expeditious conclusion. In this respect, power may shift hierarchically from the authority's management of its employees to the

SEN administrators themselves. Education administrators are therefore able to determine (to a large extent) their own work methods in order to achieve the desired end. Managerial control is focused more on the outcome of decisions, rather than on the work process itself, which is left to the workers.

One example of the ways in which administrators are seen to determine their own methods may be evidenced in the following extracts of an interview with an administrator talking about the construction of a statement and the notice that is issued to parents with the statement,

> *'if you look at the new regulations, at the wording of the letter that we're supposed to send out with a proposed statement, I'm horrified at having to write my letters like that. Horrified.'* (LEA3, 677-679),

> *'it doesn't mean to say it's got to be exactly like that, but 'prescribed by regulations' means it's got to be pretty close to it, and it's the same with your letters and your notices. You issue a notice and the notice is that which is prescribed by regulations in appendix 2 or schedule or whatever, and we look at that and think this is what we've got to do, right, and the first time we did that with the 93 Act, I took a copy of it and I cannibalised it. I messed about with it, I took chunks out, I put chunks in, I changed the wording, and said I'm not saying it like that. I'll say the same thing but I'm not saying it like that. I'm not saying, 'this authority hereby issues a notice under section so-and-so, so-and-so and so-and-so', but I'm not saying that. We say the right things, but we say it in a different way'* (LEA3, 726-735).

> *'whatever the legislation says, and I still believe this, whatever the legislation says, you can do what the hell you like, as long as the parents are with you'* (LEA3, 1313-1315).

This respondent spoke passionately and at length about the way in which regulations must or should be followed, and the subsequent outrage and defiance is clearly evident in the use of 'horrified' and the often repeated 'I'm not saying'. The regulations have been accepted only in principle, with this individual constructing a different version of a letter that would be more acceptable, both to the administrator and parents alike. This is seen as a self-developed strategy of power integral to resisting or counterbalancing the effect of the panopticon. One further succinct example of how administrators explain their resistance to authority,

> '*well certainly I'm not a one to follow legislation'* (LEA5, 286).

This analysis therefore provides evidence that education administrators and parents alike may resist the disciplinary power of the SEN panopticon, either overtly or covertly. Such resistance may be seen to constitute a powerful challenge to the system itself.

10.7 A challenge to the panoptic system

Foucault warned against an analysis that equates power with repression, and that power itself may be viewed as positive and creative (Foucault, 1977). Hence the effects of the SEN panopticon can also be useful and effective. Some determined parents who may be *particularly politically-minded, articulate, middle-class* and who are therefore able to exercise strength in their argument can, within this system, overcome, *or at the very least* match the power exercised by the administrator.

In effect, they have created the possibility for a new subject position from which parents may actively challenge the panoptic system of SEN administration. This subject position is seen to spearhead the challenge in such a way as to foster contestations from many cells of the periphery of the panopticon, with branches that spread out in many directions to many sites of resistance. Parents may challenge decisions unilaterally or collectively, at a local level or national level, but each separate dispute creates a controversy within the system that permeates through all areas of the panopticon. The data confirm this,

> *'now the ones who are winning are likely to be the most articulate, pushier parents'* (LEA9, 149-150).

Meaning, from a social constructionist standpoint, is never fixed and a process of 'transcoding' (Hall, 2001) might serve to reverse the negative stereotype of the more articulate, middle-class, pushier parent, transforming it instead into an enlightening, liberating, empowering subject position.

In such scenarios, parents are seen to actively challenge the panoptic structure/system of special education by explicitly contesting its mechanism of power and it is here that other subjectivities of both parties may be possible. For example, it is possible that the subject positions of administrators become less powerful against the weight of parental (social)

subject positions that become more powerful. At this point it is useful to return to the quotation on Page 1,

> *'whatever the contribution made by philanthropy and philosophy, the substantial administrative changes* [to education and special education will] *be enacted by the Government only when the scales* [are] *tipped into necessity by the weight of social, economic and political pressure'* (Ford et al, 1982:22).

The analysis here suggests that substantial administrative changes are not so far away, due to the upsurge of parental pressure groups which may certainly be seen to tip the scales their way regarding social and political pressure. Economic change is, however, harder to effect and is currently seen to maintain the status quo regarding choice of school. Special education provision in this country is undergoing very many rapid changes, and parental involvement in the system should encourage more and more parents to actively seek the best for their child.

10.8 Critical reflection

This chapter has presented a Foucauldian analysis of the discourse of 'choice' operating within the SEN system, which is viewed as a panoptic structure of disciplinary power. In answering the second research question (see Section 5.6), the disciplinary power of the SEN panopticon affects the discourse of 'choice' for parents in that choice itself is less substantial than it is made to appear by the LEA and its administrators. The analysis has provided an alternative understanding of how economies of power affect choice for parents of children with SEN. It is suggested that a placement at NICE for parents of children with motor disorders would be refused, due to education administrators who, enmeshed within a system of disciplinary power as they are, are so positioned as to discourage absolute parental choice. However, the multiplicity of parental voices opposed to such power relations challenges the panoptic system of SEN and may yet be seen to break the system. It remains to be seen just how resistant the SEN panopticon will become in the face of such opposition.

The previous chapter (see Section 9.8) has suggested that dominant discourses need to be replaced by equally dominant discourses if they are to be effectively challenged. Since the whole statementing process might yet be overturned, such new discourses may come to the fore.

CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSIONS AND DEBATES

11.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw together the major findings from the grounded theory and discourse analyses (Chapters 8 and 10 respectively) as they relate to the research questions (see Section 5.6), to show how the experiences and language of education administrators result in the construction and maintenance of disability. Implications and practical applications of the findings will then be offered. Limitations and successes of the research will then be considered before moving on to examine quality criteria by which it may be evaluated. A note regarding reflexivity will finally be presented.

11.2 General discussion of findings

The first research question asked,

1. How do education administrators construct their experiences of school choice for children with motor disorders?

This has been fully explored and explained through the building of a new theoretical framework (Chapter 8). The social constructionist grounded theory findings suggest that education administrators sustain notions of disability and disabling practices by coercing parents into choosing mainstream schools over and above other possible alternatives. In this way, many children remain pathologised, having no opportunity to develop in ways that might work better for them, for example, through the experience of CE. These findings support Billington's (1996; 2000) theories of how the social sciences and governmental rhetoric separate and pathologise children with disabilities.

The conflict and sites of struggle that education administrators face on a daily basis result on the creation of teams of decision-makers which, they say, enables equitable decisions to be made. However, this serves only to dilute and relinquish individual responsibility, insulating workers from the psychological stress of conflict, and workers accede to the

power of the system. By restricting the voices of parents in such teams, these discursive actions have the effect of ensuring parents and their children are subjected to their own oppression.

By drawing on discourses of fairness and equity, education administrators in this study have shown support for theorists who argue that ideals of equity should be guiding principles in education (Rowles et al, 2000; Thomas and Loxley, 2001). However, not one respondent clearly articulated their own interpretation of equitable practices, showing how such a concept is hard to define (Lee, 1996).

The grounded theory analysis also shows that education administrators have limited understanding of specific childhood disabilities and the accompanying alternative educational approaches that address these difficulties (see Sections 8.10.3 and 8.10.4). These findings support Beresford (1995) who showed that many parents believe that administrators do not understand the experience of caring for a child with CP.

The discourse analysis showed how the SEN system in the United Kingdom may be viewed as a panoptic structure, in which disciplinary power affects everyone within the system, and also demonstrates how parents are subject to self-surveillance and self-control. By administrators and parents submitting to this panoptic system, and by parents choosing to opt for a mainstream school for their child with a motor disorder, this illustrates how inequalities within schooling are produced and maintained, in support of Ryan's (1991) analysis, and also shows how dominant discourses prevail.

The second research question,

2. How does power affect the nature of choice available for parents seeking CE for their child?

may therefore be answered as follows. The disciplinary power of the SEN panopticon affects the nature of choice for parents in an altogether negative manner. This research has shown that school choice is nothing more than an illusion and this is why CE is usually denied. Parents enlist themselves in their own oppression by acceding to the power relations of the panopticon. The same is so of education administrators, as they appear to

prefer to work in ignorance of alternative educational programmes in order to sustain their own privileged subject positions within LEAs.

However, both analyses have found that parents who are highly articulate, middle-class, politically-minded and forceful in obtaining the resources/placement they want for their child are indeed the exception to the norm, in support of Gross (1996). In this respect, it can be said that the more parents become aware of their rights and are more able to exercise these rights, then increasing pressure will be put on the system in ways that may ultimately force change in a positive way for parents. So, to the charge that these parents are currently diverting resources away from other needy children (Macready, 1991; Riddell et al, 1991), these parents can be seen to be on a mission of emancipatory tactics, to challenge the existing system, to have their hitherto unheard voices heard on behalf of both themselves *and* other parents. The ultimate effect of this might be to overcome existing structures and systems of disciplinary power, to enable all parents to become more autonomous in decisions that affect their children's futures. Change never usually happens swiftly, neither is it easy to achieve, but these parents are, nevertheless, attempting to break new ground.

11.3 Implications/practical applications

A major concern for social psychologists is the extent to which their research findings may be utilised outside of academia. The findings from this research are important in that they may be used to inform education administrators as to how their constructions of the statementing and school placement process may be understood by an outsider (perhaps parents), particularly in terms of the conflict they experience and how they attempt to resolve that conflict (constructionist grounded theory analysis), and also how power affects parental choice of school (Foucauldian discourse analysis). In this way, an awareness of the implications of power imbalances and subject positions constructed by the language they employ might enable education administrators to reflect upon their practices and subsequently strive to improve both their own and parents' positions. In other words, since there can never be any ultimate truths, it is possible for individuals to 're-make' themselves in a different way through using different forms of language (transcoding) which have a liberating effect (Hall, 2001; Parker, 2003). Bloor (1997) recommends such feedback to selective audiences of key stakeholders in any research area.

Findings may also be used to raise awareness of campaigners and parent lobbying groups and also the less articulate parents to highlight possible areas of conflict between them and education administrators, including, importantly, how these might be avoided. Such awareness might also enable individuals to contest their hitherto enforced subject positions in an emancipatory manner, thereby promoting individual agency and enhancing equality of power. Willig (1999) particularly advocates feedback to service users.

11.3.1 Limitations of the research

It has to be acknowledged that the data gathered for this study reflected the views of only one particular group of individuals, that of special education administrators. The viewpoints of parents within this system have not been explored, however this has been previously studied and reported (Owens, 2000), with such a report forming the basis for this research.

In addition, the data reflect such viewpoints at this particular time, at a particular geographical location (the Midlands of England) and therefore may be viewed as situationally specific. However, the findings may be equally transferable and applied to a similar group of individuals, within a similar context and location. As social constructionism points out that there may be a multiplicity of realities and interpretations, the analyses within this thesis may be viewed as one reading of the texts.

11.3.2 Successes of the research

Both the grounded theory and discourse analyses achieved what they set out to achieve and answered both research questions. By taking a social constructionist stance towards the research, and bypassing standard grounded theory requirements to include detailed descriptions of the properties and dimensions of each concept, also by stressing contingency conditions rather than to show a cause and effect-type connection between concepts, I believe that a very strong connection was made between the two chosen methodologies. The thesis is firmly anchored in the data and my interpretations of it, creating a joint construction within the paradigm of social constructionist philosophy. Although the interview respondents spoke individually during each interview, providing one version of experience, I view them all as working collectively within the culture of

special education administration within the larger arena of education provision, and therefore the findings may be understood as being derived from a collective resource.

The privileging effect of any discourse analysis may be seen when it is viewed in terms of power. Many may conceive of LEAs as possessing ultimate power over children's educational and social-psychological futures. However, it is asserted that the administrative structure represented within this discourse analysis has, by its very academic analysis, been reduced to the subjugated object of an academic discourse. The LEA therein has become less powerful, with the rights and privilege afforded academic scholarship holding more power; the power to watch over, to scrutinise, to see without being seen. The panoptic system has, within this research, undergone a shift in emphasis.

11.3.3 Suggestions for future research

When viewing the statementing process for children with identifiable educational needs, future researchers may consider taking a longitudinal study of decision-making which incorporates the voices of all individuals involved in the process, with explicitly detailed multi-method investigations of phenomena. For example, case studies of children undergoing the process from start to finish might be undertaken in order to develop understandings from all viewpoints along the path. Parental interviews, statementing officer interviews, teacher and educational psychologist interviews and videotaped evidence of a child's abilities, and possibilities for future development may be gathered every month over the course of time in order to secure a historical picture of what happens for all parties, physically, emotionally, psychologically and behaviourally. In addition, if possible, the views of the child should be sought.

11.4 Criteria for evaluation

11.4.1 A rejection of three basic concepts

The three essential criteria for scientific and social scientific research include validity, reliability and replicability as being paramount in evaluation of any research project. However, many contemporary qualitative theorists and researchers argue that these concepts hold no place in the field of qualitative enquiry (Johnson, 1999; Taylor, 2001a; Horsburgh, 2003). Indeed, they were employed originally in quantitative research methods in an attempt to deal with the problems associated with that particular type of positivist

enquiry (Woolgar, 1988), and there they should remain. This being so, qualitative research should not be judged by these criteria.

Importantly, Leininger (1994) suggests that qualitative researchers should develop and use criteria for evaluation that pertain immediately to the qualitative paradigm, essentially arguing that it is inappropriate to re-language quantitative terms (for example, validity, reliability) into qualitative terms, subsequently using them to justify findings, as this,

> *'reflects a lack of knowledge of the different purposes, goals and philosophical assumptions of the two paradigms'* (p.96).

Researchers working within a positivist paradigm conduct investigations of a knowable external world and contribute to the sum of knowledge of that world by revealing predictable patterns and relationships which have enduring features (Taylor, 2001a). On the other hand, qualitative theorists and researchers from within a social constructionist paradigm consider that the world is not readily knowable and there are multiple versions of reality, which continually change in a continually changing social world (Burr, 1995; Hall, 2001; Wetherell, 2001b). From this perspective, knowledge in terms of research findings are assumed to be both situated and contingent (Taylor, 2001a). In other words, findings are considered to refer only to the specific spatio-temporal context of the research, according also to the participants themselves, but they may be transferable across situations. This being so, stable and enduring truth is impossible to achieve.

So the problem remains that the findings from this research in particular cannot be evaluated on realist assumptions and principles, making it necessary to posit alternatives from within its own paradigm.

11.4.2 Framework for quality criteria

Complexity and disputes reign in evaluating qualitative research (Taylor, 2001b). Although different criteria for evaluating qualitative research have been forwarded by many (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Robson, 1993; Leininger, 1994; Smith, 1996), there has, as yet, been no consensus of theoretical opinion as to which criteria should be universally accepted. Taylor (2001a) suggests that researchers should explain and justify their own chosen criteria for evaluation. This is the crux of the remainder of this chapter, to propose how this research

might be evaluated. Through an examination of the literature and from an understanding of the research process, the following criteria might be applied.

11.4.2.1 Logical reasoning and rigour

The systematic investigation involved in the constructionist grounded theory study (also the utilisation of CAQDAS) demonstrates the rigour inherent in the research process, leading to a logical and sound new theoretical framework. Although the area of SEN is fraught with emotionality due to the nature of some children's particular needs, and although my involvement is and has been salient in the reporting and the process of the research, I believe that the findings are persuasive by the strength of their argument, rather than emotionally.

Inconsistency and diversity within the data have been presented to substantiate rigour in both analyses. Such diversity signals the boundaries of certain discourses and ways in which participants challenge the status quo of existing knowledges. Rich detail in both presented data and the analyses serves to demonstrate how rigour and logical reasoning have been achieved.

11.4.2.2 Internal consistency

Madill et al (2000) propose that a radical relativist epistemology such as discourse analysis should show internal consistency, in that the analysis should hang together and show no major contradictions. It should also show a degree of reader evaluation, in as much as the reader of the analysis is able to understand and gain insights from the analysis.

11.4.2.3 Member validation/confirmability

To establish the quality of the analyses, member validation has been used within the research process. The central story-line within the constructionist grounded theory study was fed back to all participants with an invitation to comment, positively or negatively, on the findings. Out of the nine participants, only one responded with the comment that it was interesting to read. Once reflected back to those the analysis concerns, one might hope that an awareness of how they are seen to function might enable them to critically reflect on their own practices with positive effect. More narrowly, however, interview transcripts were also passed to all participants for verification and further comments to be made.

11.4.2.4 Triangulation

Triangulation is another form of rigour (Smith, 1996) which may be employed when evaluating qualitative research. In terms of the constructionnist grounded theory study, triangulation was achieved by another member of the supervision team corroborating the care category and concepts which were developed in relation to the data. Triangulation may also be achieved by tackling a research question in more than one way. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that if data are subjected to more than one type of analysis, then 'rich and variegated' analyses should result (p.15). This was achieved for this research through the adoption of two methodologies (constructionist grounded theory and Foucauldian discourse analysis). Additionally, within the discourse analysis, more than one data source was obtained with which to authenticate the analysis. Numerous discussions with my project supervisors also aided in refining conceptualisations of the problem.

11.4.2.5 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings may be transferred to a similar situation or context. Within the paradigm underpinning this research, no universal laws or truths have been found which would apply to all. Rather, the findings indicate that the same phenomena may be evidenced in other LEAs in England. This opens up possibilities for further research, in which researchers might investigate the constructions of education administrators working in other sites across the country, attempting to apply the findings generated from this research.

Salmon (2003) states that qualitative researchers should clearly articulate what is being transferred. In this regard, the ways in which education administrators in this study construct and maintain disability by ensuring parents opt for a mainstream placement even though their child has a disability that might necessitate an alternative programme of education may be transferred to other LEAs. In addition, education administrators are so positioned in a panoptic system of power, discipline and surveillance as to discourage proper and absolute parental choice. Both statements may serve as propositions to be tested in other educational contexts within England.

11.4.2.6 Relevance and usefulness

This research is useful in academic terms by providing a novel perspective and new theory in the area of SEN and school choice. It is also particularly relevant in a social and

historical context. Educational issues are seen to be debated in the media on a daily basis on national and local levels, as the Government strives to achieve 'Excellence for All Children' (DfEE, 1998). The usefulness of the research may also be seen in its practical application in the real world outside of academia (see Section 11.3).

11.5 Reflexivity

One feature that characterises qualitative enquiry in general, and social constructionism in particular, is that the researcher's values and beliefs guide and shape the research process, findings and conclusions. Both the researcher and the respondents play their part in constructing versions of reality within the enquiry (Burr, 1995; Shank, 1995). Therefore, most findings that result from qualitative studies (involving interviews as data source, for example) have been socially negotiated by both parties being sensitive to the process. Within this social constructionist philosophy, there is an emphasis on interaction, where negotiations between individuals are of prime importance. This aspect must be considered when evaluating qualitative research.

Willig (2001) defines reflexivity as the researcher's awareness of one's contribution to the construction of meanings, an awareness that traverses the entire research process. In addition to which is an awareness also of the impossibility of remaining outside the subject matter. Subsequently, the researcher's involvement in a study inherently influences and is influenced by the investigation. This awareness may be considered by acknowledging that transcribed interviews have been jointly constructed by the analyst and the respondents.

In any social psychological research, then, the researcher exerts their influence over, and is in turn influenced by, the research, either explicitly or implicitly. Many qualitative theorists and researchers advocate the inclusion of a reflexive analysis by which to address these influences via a commentary at the end of each section of the report (Bannister, et al, 1994). However, it is sometimes the case that reflexive comments may be included at any given point if deemed necessary by the researcher and when being pertinent to the analysis - parallel reflexivity. I have chosen to write certain chapters and sections in the first person as I believe, by doing so, my own involvement in the construction of the research, and indeed its ownership, may be clearly understood.

11.6 Critical reflection

> *'Just as we rely on reflexivity to carry out good research, conducting good research tends to improve our reflexivity' (Russell and Kelly, 2002).*

In Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4) I illustrated the specific value position I hold that I feel influenced my initial engagement with the research. A commitment to qualitative research and reflexivity has enabled me to examine the impact of my research at various points along the way but, more importantly, at the close of play. What have I learned? How has the research changed or transformed my thinking and my outlook on life? What has listening to language and my reflexivity taught me?

Fundamentally, I have learned that powerful institutions within society, although commonly viewed as being monumental, unchangeable structures, may be challenged at the most basic level through an understanding that they have been brought to that status primarily through language and the development of dominant discourses. Equally, they may be challenged by attempting to displace them through academic critique. It is possible to resist governmental power as an individual, however such resistance only serves to open more spaces into which power may infiltrate.

The most important question that this research has highlighted for me is the question of how to supplant dominant discourses with new understandings and meanings. If the current statementing process is to be reviewed, a fresh approach in the use of language framing disability and education needs to be located and used purposefully and positively.

A final word

The very first page of this thesis presented Lord Rix's (2003) statement that our society and our educational system would be affronted should each child with SEN receive less than the very best it can offer. This research has highlighted that, for some children with motor disorders, CE is seen as the very best we can offer for three reasons. Firstly, because some parents request a placement at NICE for their child because of the nature of its conductive pedagogy. Secondly, because CE has been constructed by some as 'the best', illustrated through the choice of language of education administrators, for example,

> *'the local authority's duty is to make provision that's appropriate to the child's needs, which is suitable to the child's needs. It doesn't have to make the best provision'* (LEA3, 918-920).

Thirdly, because CE is now being incorporated into other educational settings – *if it was* not considered effective or useful, it would not have been. This being the case, it is with hope that this thesis creates in its reader a desire for change, a desire for society to strive to give each child with SEN the very best it has to offer, and the desire to challenge all forms of power that inherently pose a threat to individual choice.

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APPENDIX I

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - CONDUCTORS

Introduction

As part of my research, I am investigating the area of special educational needs and, in particular, educational provision for children with motor disorders. Thank you for agreeing to take part. I would like us to simply talk about your thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences you have had, in fact anything related to your work. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer or any topics you would rather not discuss, then please feel free to tell me and I will abide by your wishes. I do appreciate there may well be things you would rather not talk about. I assure you that anonymity will be observed and your name will not appear in the final written thesis. You are most welcome to read the thesis once complete and this will be placed in the library at the university. Could I just confirm that you agree for the interview to be recorded? The tape-recording will be transcribed and a copy hand-delivered to you. Please feel free to ask me to turn off the tape-recorder at any time you feel it necessary. Do not worry about any of the questions I will ask you, please understand that I am the novice and you are the expert.

- Why did you choose to become a conductor?
- What training in conductive education have you had?
- Could you please describe your role here (a typical working day, what age group of children)?
- How are you able to teach the national curriculum as well as observing the principles of CE?
- Have you any experience of working in a special school (if so, how does this compare with NICE)?
- Could you explain the term 'motor disorder' (effects on development, learning, the family)?
- Could you explain what CE is and does (philosophy, theoretical underpinning, aims)?
- What kind of relationship do you try to build with the children here?
- Could you please describe a critical incident in your work (particularly happy, sad, frustrating, uplifting)?

- Could you explain the route by which children are accepted at NICE?
- Could you describe the statementing process:
  - Who is involved?
  - How long does the process take?
  - What considerations does the LEA take into account?
  - Do parents have a choice in their child's school?
  - Who makes the decision as to which school will be named in a statement?
  - How does the LEA decide whether a placement at NICE would be appropriate for a child?
  - What happens if the LEA refuse to grant a child at NICE?
- Do you personally think that a decision to offer CE for a child has been especially right or wrong for any reason (if yes, could you explain why)?
- In your opinion, why do some parents appeal to the special educational needs tribunal (SENT)?
- Have you ever experienced a SENT (if yes, could you describe the process)?
- What happens during a child's annual review (who is involved, LEA attendance, parents' views)?
- How do you see the future for CE?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered or anything you think is important for me to understand?

Concluding remarks

Your comments have been extremely valuable for my research and I thank you once more for agreeing to talk to me. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think you might like to add anything else. Is there anything you would like to ask me about my research?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - SEN ADMINISTRATORS

Introduction

As part of my research, I am investigating the area of special educational needs and, in particular, educational provision for children with motor disorders. Thank you for agreeing to take part. I would like us to simply talk about your thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences you have had, in fact anything related to your work. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer or any topics you would rather not discuss, then please feel free to tell me and I will abide by your wishes. I do appreciate there may well be things you would rather not talk about. I assure you that anonymity will be observed and your name will not appear in the final written thesis. You are most welcome to read the thesis once complete and this will be placed in the library at the university. Could I just confirm that you agree for the interview to be recorded? The tape-recording will be transcribed and a copy hand-delivered to you. Please feel free to ask me to turn off the tape-recorder at any time you feel it necessary. Do not worry about any of the questions I will ask you, please understand that I am the novice and you are the expert.

- Could you give me a broad overview of the structure of the SEN administration department within this LEA (how many officers, how their work is divided)?
- What does your role involve (daily activities, duties)?
- What training have you had (previous and on-going)?
- How much input to the statementing process do you have?
- What sources of information do you access to help in the assessment and statementing process? How is this prioritised?
- How do you feel about the level of responsibility you hold (professionally, personally, towards the children)?
- Who are the major decision-makers in the SEN team?
- Could you describe a critical incident in your work (perhaps could not reach a decision on a school placement, particularly adversarial case)? Could you explain the role of the educational psychologist in the assessment process?
- Do you think there are any constraints upon you in the statementing process?

- What are your views of parents having greater involvement in their child's education and the statementing process? Do you think that having a physical disability has implications for a child's education (if so, what are those implications)?
- How do you personally feel about specialist schools that provide, for example, conductive education?
- What do you understand conductive education to be (compare with special school provision)?
- What are your views on the role of the SENT in cases of dispute (could you describe a case)?
- How do you see the future for special education in the UK (also the future of specialist schools that offer, for example, conductive education)?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that we have not covered or anything that you think it is important for me to understand?

Concluding remarks

Your comments have been extremely valuable for my research and I thank you once more for agreeing to talk to me. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think you might like to add anything else. Is there anything you would like to ask me about my research?

APPENDIX III
INITIAL LETTER OF REQUEST

Name and address of LEA officer

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

Research programme - special educational needs

I am a postgraduate researcher based in the Division of Psychology at the University of Wolverhampton. The focus of my three-year research programme is childhood disability and educational provision, involving an exploration of service-providers' experiences of the statementing process and school placement. It is my intention to speak with many people influential within special educational needs provision, specifically those people concerned with the process of statementing. This is a new focus of research which it is anticipated will contribute significantly to prior research conducted in this selected area by researchers at the University.

I would like to enquire whether you could possibly put me in touch with officers in (your) LEA who may be willing to participate in my research. Participation would take the form of an interview lasting between thirty minutes and one hour, which would be tape-recorded for later transcription, conducted at a time and date to suit the officers. I am enclosing a few 'Informed Consent' forms, which would need to be completed and returned to me, should you or any officer feel able to participate at this time. I will then be in a position to make contact to arrange mutually convenient appointment times.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this with me further on the telephone, please feel free to contact me on the number below. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind regards,

Angela D Morgan.

APPENDIX IV
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I give my informed consent to participate in this research into education administrators' experiences of childhood disability and special educational needs provision. I understand that:

- I will be interviewed for between 30 and 60 minutes, the interview to be tape-recorded for later transcription.
- I may request the tape-recorder to be switched off at any time I feel it necessary for any reason.
- I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty of any kind.
- Any information divulged other than whilst recording will not be used at a later time.
- I will be sent a copy of the transcript in order for me to validate its contents and for me to clarify interpretation made during transcription.
- My name, position and place of work will be kept secret and will appear nowhere on the final written thesis.
- Both the tape-recording and hard copy of the manuscript will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Computer-based information will be kept under a secure password.
- Documents will be seen by the researcher and members of the supervision team only.

NAME (please print).....

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

PLACE OF WORK:

POSITION HELD.....

NAME of LEA.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

.....

.....

TELEPHONE.....

E-MAIL.....

APPENDIX V
INTERVIEW FIELD NOTES/MEMOS

LEA1

I immediately took to (name) - a warm, middle-aged and friendly person, with a very personable character. I was made to feel at ease straight away, not, I believe, via any determined effort on his/her part, but through his/her very self. After having being warned about the elite nature of LEA officers, I was quite surprised to find (name) so welcoming and helpful. (Name) asked about the nature of my research, as we sat in a small interview room that had been set aside for our interview, and I explained its broad nature to him/her, that I would be exploring 'his/her' perceptions, etc, and that if I asked something quite personal, then s/he should in no way feel inclined to answer. It was at this point that (name) offered a little detail about his/her past. S/he explained that s/he had two sons who had died at a young age and that if they had lived, they would both have probably been in need of special educational provision. Another family member is autistic (apparently living in [country], according to the later interview). However, (name) was at pains to say that this, s/he felt, had nothing to do with his/her choice of career - s/he hadn't been unduly influenced by his/her own experiences. After the interview, I asked (name) for the full name of (name), the Assessments officer, so that I could approach him/her for an interview. S/he gladly provided this.

LEA2

(Name) talked for 15 minutes PRIOR to commencement of the interview, telling me all about the Parent Partnership Service even before we had begun. I found it extremely difficult to interrupt him/her and suggest that s/he wait for the tape-recorder to be turned on. Throughout the interview (name) doesn't stop for breathe, creating a monologue, quite preventing me from asking any questions. The times that I managed to speak were few and far between, and questions were not really related to anything I wanted to ask in terms of the interview schedule. I particularly felt that this interview was dominated by the power of the respondent, even though I had originally intended to approach each interview with attempts to create an egalitarian footing. I interpreted (name)'s monologue as 'the power of knowledge' on his/her part: s/he appeared to be well in control of his/her subject area, and wasn't at all concerned as to my presence, for example, why I had requested an interview in

the first place. My initial impressions were that this transcript is not going to be particularly relevant to my research, although on closer inspection I was proved wrong.

(Name) uses the same stock phrases, for example, 'parents and carers', in a somewhat 'textbook' style of speech - rigid - where's the human element in his/her work? Does s/he talk like this to parents? If so, how is this interpreted by parents? The statementing process is described by (name) as an analogy of war, for example, battling; mission; attack; fire-fighting; negotiation; mediation, although (name) states that s/he is quite opposed to this frame of reference.

When talking about funding/money/resources, both this respondent and the last liken this to buying a car, for example, if you want a new car, you have to have the one you can afford, not the one you particularly want. It will be interesting to find if any other administrator speaks of the same analogy. (Name) suggested at the end of the interview that I might like to contact (name) at (name) LEA (SEN inspector).

LEA3

(Name) actually spoke to me for three hours on the morning of the interview, even though the tape recorder had finished after an hour and a half. Not all of the data obtained following the interview would have been appropriate to my research though, as (name) provided facts and figures about schools in (town) - just as (name) had predicted s/he would! We sat in the same interview room as in my meeting with (name). The interview was extremely productive, as (name) 'gave' a lot of him/herself during our time together. S/he was quite scathing of recent legislation (having worked in the area of special educational needs administration for 24 years) and, although s/he was very pedantic where legislation is concerned, I felt s/he was at the point in his professional career now when s/he could afford to be, perhaps, professionally belligerent. (Name) offered a couple of names for me to follow up. S/he also suggested I get hold of a copy of the SENT Annual Report (which I have now done from the website). S/he also offered to send me a copy of the covering letter s/he sends to parents with proposed statements (this s/he has re-drafted from the legislative guidance). This was a very productive interview in terms of historical and current legislation on special educational needs, and (name) was very forceful in his/her criticisms of legislative framework. I feel instinctively that this interview will be an extremely rich data source.

LEA4

(Name) is a very busy person, and due to important telephone calls interrupting our conversation, I felt it wise to adhere to my more important questions in order to minimise his/her disruption. Hence a rather shortened interview. The telephone calls referred to a parent from (town) who has recently been given a 60 day prison sentence for allowing his/her two children to truant from school. A local radio station were requesting an interview with an officer from the LEA and (name) was drawn in to advise. Prior to our conversation, (name) asked if I minded if s/he make a quick telephone call. This, s/he offered, was to do with a Government handout of two million pounds to 34 LEAs to fight street crime. On a conceptual level, this interview was productive in that it supported many themes drawn from the first two. Theoretically, I can begin to see the development of a themed analysis, although the research is still in its very early stages.

LEA5

(Name) - a white-haired, middle-aged person. Very friendly and warm, softly spoken, probably very good with children. In contrast to the first two interviews, which had been conducted in a separate interview 'booth' or room, this interview took place in the respondent's office. We were interrupted by an important phone call, at which point (name) asked for the tape recorder to be turned off. The building we were in used to be used as a reform school for boys - a rabbit warren of corridors and rooms. This interview was more of a very comfortable and pleasant discussion, rather than a semi-structured interview, with a respondent more than willing to share his/her thoughts and experiences. S/he was, however, anxious not to divulge too much information on a case that (name) authority had lost to parents of an autistic boy that would be quite well-known should it be mentioned in any publicised material. I assured him/her it would not be used.

My main conceptual idea that was formulated during this interview, and that which I could now relate to the first ones, was that my overall impression of (name)'s core values is that of 'WORKING FOR THE GREATER GOOD'. This might prove to be a major category, and I must analyse all the previous transcripts in this respect, but also refer to this concept in future interviews.

LEA6

See memo for LEA7 - both interviews conducted on the same morning.

LEA7

I arrived at (name) LEA at 9.30am (half an hour early for my appointment with [name]). I had thought it wise to go early, having no idea where this particular LEA was located. (Name) had given me brief directions over the telephone and it was to my advantage to set out early for they turned out to be erroneous! Upon arrival, I was offered a cup of tea and shown into the kitchen area to wait for (name). I occupied myself with reading the situations vacant in the TES. Whilst waiting, I availed myself of a copy of (name) County Council's 'Best Value Performance Plan 2001/2002' - Education Services Plan, with the thought this might come in useful later. At 10.00, (name) introduced him/herself and offered that (name) had asked if s/he would like to sit in on our interview as his/her work is directly connected with children with physical disabilities. S/he apologised as (name) had not arrived and no-one knew where s/he was or how to contact him/her. As time wore on and staff were becoming concerned over his/her absence, (name) suggested that we begin our interview. S/he made us both coffee and we went to (name)'s office (cold, stark, roomy and echoic). (Name) chose to sit with his/her back to the window. Although s/he had appeared before to be extremely confidant, his/her demeanour changed and s/he sat on the edge of his/her seat with his/her hands folded in his/her lap, appearing quite nervous. Was it the tape recorder or the non-appearance of (name)? General feelings - (name) is a strong inclusionist.

(Name) arrived just as we were finishing, so there is a pause in (name)'s tape recording as greetings were made and apologies given - (name) had apparently forgotten about our meeting. I reassured him/her that I didn't mind and also that I was glad to see him/her alive and well as we had all grown quite concerned over his/her absence. (Name) and I quickly finished our interview (one last question!) and s/he left to fetch me an article s/he had recently read about children going into mainstream from special schools. (Name) was eager to know how my results would be disseminated - s/he wanted to know whether s/he should be speaking 'on behalf of the LEA' or from his/her own personal experiences and perceptions. I took the time to explain what I was interested in, including the point that I would deliver a copy of his/her transcript to him/her so that s/e could censor anything s/he felt uneasy about. Following our interview, I was quick to thank him/her profusely for

giving me so much time given that his/her busy schedule had to be rearranged somewhat. S/he offered that s/he will mention my research at the next meeting in a couple of days and ask if any colleagues are willing to participate. General impressions - extremely positive and productive interview. Good data with regard to the developing theme of 'the common good'.

LEA8

The reason for this interview was theoretical sampling following the initial grounded theory analysis of previous interview data. There is a need to fill in gaps in the analysis and allow the theory to make further progress. I arrived early for this interview but nevertheless I was shown upstairs to meet (name). An assistant made coffee and we arranged ourselves in a quiet room adjacent to the open-plan office. It was more of a storage room really, with lots of chairs, filing cabinets and boxes. Yet it served its purpose and eliminated the noise from the office.

(Name) is a young Asian officer, with a direct, warm gaze although a limp handshake. We chatted amicably about my research project and his/her work. S/he believed that it is an integral part of his/her work to share information with others and didn't hesitate to reply to my request for participation in the research.

Initial impression = contradictions in his/her dialogue - perhaps due to the nature of the work, in its complexity and challenge, or perhaps due to his/her needing to be perceived as covering every base and being transparent during the interview. Following the interview, s/he suggested that (name), another team leader, might like to be interviewed. S/he suggested s/he might e-mail me to that effect. One other team leader is away ill at present. S/he also gave me quite a lot of documentation, particularly with regard to parents' views during assessment. (Name) LEA's SEN handbook is in print at present and s/he will send me a copy when it arrives (probably February).

LEA9

This interview had been scheduled for 10.00 and I was given a half-hour time slot. I arrived early anyway in order to begin on time. (Name) is very high up in the structure of the LEA hierarchy and as such is extremely busy, hisher/ time being carefully controlled. It wasn't until 10.10 that I was greeted by (name), his/her secretary, who took me up in the

lift to the third floor and to (name)'s office. S/he apologised for being late only s/he had been in a meeting, but then shook me even further by announcing that s/he was due at another meeting at 10.30!

Since I was now under the impression that I had only 20 minutes to conduct this interview, I felt somewhat under pressure, and therefore rushed through the questions I needed to ask without probing too much on the finer points, which I later regret, as there were times during the interview in which I really felt I wanted to know more, but nevertheless I had many other questions to ask. So, all in all, this was a particularly difficult interview, and one which I would have liked to pursue at much greater length, as we only touched the surface of many points. However, having said this, the grounded theory analysis is well underway and this interview was purposefully conducted with a view to theoretical sampling, as was the previous interview.

(Name) is middle-aged, grey-haired and wears glasses. S/he appeared warm and friendly and I had the impression that s/he initially chose his/her words very carefully, inasmuch as s/he might have thought that I knew precious little about SEN. As the interview proceeded, however, s/he appeared to warm to his/her subject and deliberated less on the language s/he used. In actual fact, although I cut the interview short out of deference to (name)'s time constraints, once the tape-recorder had been turned off, s/he was more than happy to discuss further issues which I believed would have been crucial to my analysis.

Issues that were discussed following the interview included the stress that some officers experience when dealing with emotional parents and also how they try to deal with this. Also discussed was the perception of some parents of the overarching power of the LEA. Although these points had been discussed briefly during the interview, I really felt that (name) would have made a major contribution to the analysis and I therefore propose to ask him/her to expand on these reflections when I deliver the tape transcript.

I actually left the office at 10.55 (s/he would have been half an hour late for his/her next meeting, but s/he said they would continue without him/her anyway!). As we walked downstairs together, s/he asked me why I had become interested in children with physical disabilities, for example, did I have a child with a physical disability, and we had a light discussion about this.

APPENDIX VI
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION NOTES

Date: Monday 7 April 2003.

Time: 9.00am – 12.30pm.

Venue: Undisclosed Local Education Authority in the West Midlands

The building itself is old and has many corridors with rooms/offices leading off them. Upon arrival (name) showed me around the building, explaining that it used to be a school and that the city is divided into 3 education districts, the building reflecting this in that district 1 is dealt with on the first floor, district 2 on the second floor and district 3 on the third floor – neatly ordered for efficiency. The education budget for the city is divided into these three areas. The SEN division is situated on the first floor and comprises one main office in which all administrators are located. It comprises 6 women and 2 men. As (name) was showing me around and discussing the different areas of the city, s/he mentioned that certain areas housed parents who 'know their rights and don't hesitate to state their case'. Later, there was apparently evidence of this when (name) received a phone call from one of the aforementioned parents. It was apparently, however, a quiet day as far as the phones were concerned. I was also shown a small room which, (name) explained, was used to interview parents. We laughed together about this because this had been where I had originally conducted my interview with him/her! The room itself is approximately eight feet by seven feet, very small. It houses one desk and three chairs, one on one side of the desk and two on the other. A small window is located at the end of the desk.

The SEN office is rectangular in shape, approximately 40 feet by 28 feet. Individual desks have been positioned around the walls of the office, placed so that the workers face the centre of the room (and each other). Windows run the length of the longer walls, with the remaining wall space covered in education-related posters, whiteboards and notices. Pot plants have been sporadically placed atop filing cabinets. In the centre of the office, six benches have been drawn together to create a large space on which piles of leaflets and files have been carefully placed.

Upon entering the office, I was aware that I was being warily regarded by everyone, but since (name) introduced me as a student from the University ('She's from the university, so act intelligent!'), s/he explained that they are always wary of people they regard as 'intellectual', and my being a University researcher therefore made me 'an intellectual'. S/he light-heartedly told me to 'just ignore them'. There was lots of friendly banter in the office with people discussing both their work and 'outside interests'. (Name) fetched a spare chair for me and placed it at his/her side, between him/herself and the adjacent desk. There was little room for me to move at all, and there were times during which I felt considerably in the way, as the person sitting at the adjacent desk needed to come and go quite often. The office was particularly small, considering there were eight people working together in there. The desks were overflowing with paperwork, all except one. This desk was conspicuously neat and tidy. (Name) whispered that its owner was a 'little strange – perhaps a little autistic – loves facts, figures, dates, anything like that'. Each desk was equipped with a telephone, PC with printer and foot-stool for comfort. In one corner of the office was an area which housed a fridge, a microwave and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

I noticed that all administrators in the office had considerably thick and heavy diaries on their desks, with loose sheets of paper adding to their thickness. I deduced from this that they had particularly busy schedules. (Name) informed me that there was a laptop that the officers shared in order that they might continue their work from home. This is done quite regularly as it is much quicker for statementing officers to write statements in the quiet of their own homes, away from the distractions of the office. I concurred with him/her, explaining how my own work is usually performed at home. (Name) said that they could usually get as many as four to five statements written in any one day.

I made it clear that I did not want to make a nuisance of myself by interfering with anyone's work, and that I would try to be unobtrusive whilst observing the working practices of the administrators. However, (name) seemed to want to talk to me about his/her work and chatted freely nearly all the time I was there, about his/her work but also about his/her personal life. Much of his/her chat was about administrative concerns. S/he explained where s/he lives, 'a middle class area' of the city, but spoke of a time when s/he had worked as an educational social worker and was charged with visiting families residing in the 'not-so-well-off' areas of the city. S/he said s/he kept a 'double wardrobe' -

during some of those visits, there were occasions when s/he wore an old anorak that s/he could immediately wash afterwards.

(Name) talked of OFSTED inspections, criticising their inspectors for just looking at a child's academic performance and disregarding social and deprivation factors that influence educational ability. S/he also spoke of asylum seekers who are moving into the city 'in their droves', with at least one child per month identified as having SEN and therefore being referred for assessment. When (name) joined him/her during this conversation, s/he added that 396 asylum seekers have moved into the city during the last four years. S/he does seem to be an oracle of facts and figures.

(Name) told me how the timing of the statementing process is 'absolutely crucial' as officers have to continually work to performance indicators. S/he told me that (name) has seen three generations of SEN children coming through the system and has therefore gathered a great deal of experience, subsequently drawing upon that experience to inform his/her current practices and decisions. From his/her perspective, planning is crucial. (Name) deals with 'hotspots and concerns', according to (name), and has difficulties with inclusive policies which don't take into account the wider issues of the child's needs.

(Name) made a point of coming over to me to tell me about his/her work. S/he said that his/her greatest concern is the reduction in pupil numbers at a PD school in the city, making smaller the pupil staff ratio. This officer talked in terms of conflicts and dilemmas – problems of parents residing outside the city who request placements within the city due to ever decreasing resources in outlying authorities. In other words, the number of placements available are decreasing but 'still they come'. S/he also told me about the work s/he does in training SENCo's and showed me the Powerpoint presentations s/he created for one of his/her presentations (this was basically full of facts and figures). (Name) was clearly interested in telling me all about his/her work, but previous to this morning, I had tried to secure his/her interest in participating in my research by way of an interview. S/he had declined. (Name) had, at the time of his/her interview, stated that s/he is a 'little fussy' and most likely would not want to be recorded. I was a little disappointed because although s/he was eager to talk to me in person now, when I asked him/her once more whether I could interview him/her s/he had apologised and declined.

It became apparent within conversations in the office that there are many SEN administrators who have children of their own with SEN. When I asked whether people entered the job because of this, one female officer said, 'no, it's just coincidence'. I wonder how far this is just coincidental, and also whether the same is true of administrators in other LEAs.

(Name) spoke of the area panel, the panel of decision-makers for SEN, who comprise him/herself, a representative from the child's school and an educational psychologist. Importantly, parents are absent from the panel. The panel meet half-termly. (Name) said that as schools were soon due to break up for the holidays, finances have to be cleared up and schools usually have to be chased for the necessary paperwork.

I noticed in the SEN office that there is a relatively small gap in hierarchical positions, which (name) also pointed out. The office comprises SEN administrators in terms of five statementing officers, two clerical support workers and one manager. Interestingly, the manager is seated at the far end of the office, positioned so that all the workers in the office are clearly visible to her/him. (Name) told me that the manager is the 'go-between', as the Chief Education Services Officer is usually unavailable due to the heavy work commitments afforded her/his high status within SEN administration.

(Name) told me that s/he had to attend an annual review this afternoon and I asked about the possibility of joining him/her. A discussion arose between (name) and two other individuals in which it was decided that it would not be possible for me to attend as I would have to have sought prior written permission from the child's parents and other review members. In addition, I would not have been allowed to take notes, record the meeting or otherwise make any record of the proceedings.

I took my leave of the administrators at a point when the conversation between three of the female administrators had reached 'woman's magazine status'. I thought that maybe I had outstayed my welcome and they had brought the conversation to this point as a result of this, but it might equally have been like this on an every day basis. I had no way of knowing. My powers of intuition told me nothing here. I thanked everyone for allowing me to spend time with them and that I hope I hadn't been too intrusive.

Upon reflection, I believe that the observation supported many of the constructions within the grounded theory study and will be very beneficial, if not crucial, to the discourse analysis. There was a strong element of regulation, power and order within the office and between the administrators. The subjective positions of the administrators are also worthy of analysis on many counts, not least of which is how they are positioned within the web of power of the SEN system.

APPENDIX VII

Morgan A and Hogan K. (2004). School choice and conductive education: the experiences of education administrators. *British Journal of Special Education.* (In press).

Abstract

A placement at the National Institute of Conductive Education in Birmingham for children with motor disorders is strongly preferred over mainstream or special schools by some parents, but it has been noted that this is usually refused following the current statementing process. Although funding constraints have been articulated, the authors contend that other explanations are possible, as variability remains in placement decisions. The experiences of education administrators working within special educational needs departments of Local Education Authorities who make the ultimate decision regarding school placement have hitherto been unexplored. This study offers findings from an exploratory qualitative study, which suggest that administrators are working from disparate understandings of conductive education within an arena fraught with conflict. Recommendations derived from the study include further training for *in situ* education administrators and prior training for individuals seeking a career in education administration to enhance collaborative working partnerships between administrators and parents.

Background

The term 'motor disorder' refers to a problem of control and co-ordination of intentional, goal-directed movements due to damage or disease of the central nervous system (McGee and Sutton, 1989). Due to decreased motor skills, the child experiences a decreased ability (or inability) to interact in a social world. In turn, problems of social interaction re-affect the development of practical motor functions such as posture, locomotion, manipulation, continence and speech, usually learned as the child matures (McGee and Sutton, 1989). Early intervention is vital if children with motor disorders are to make substantial progress in the motor and social domains as well as increase their self-concept and improve their academic performance (Harris, 1997).

For some time now, the accepted form of education in the United Kingdom for children with motor disorders has been either mainstream or special school. Both types of school,

however, have been viewed by some as inadequate for children who have such particular difficulties, as the range of specialists called upon to provide therapeutic intervention provides only a fragmented approach (Taylor and Emery, 1995). Moreover, there are difficulties inherent in many health professionals and teachers attempting to communicate their strategies to one another, that professionals from various sectors perform their work in isolation (Jernqvist, 1986), and the 'whole child' is not adequately addressed.

However, since 1987 when conductive education (CE) was introduced from Hungary, there is now an alternative pedagogy to those delivered by mainstream and special schools in the United Kingdom, in the form of the National Institute of Conductive Education (NICE) in Birmingham. From NICE's early beginnings CE has spread rapidly, culminating in approximately forty institutions in which fully trained conductors are employed.

The philosophy of CE involves a holistic approach to the child and understands motor disorders as problems of learning (Sutton, 1989). Within this philosophy, the child is enabled to achieve and develop autonomous skills for daily living (orthofunction). Its pedagogy requires the conscious, intrinsically motivated participation of the child and, moreover, it is the responsibility of the conductor to lead the child in this process. Subsequently, it has been argued that it is a 'moral imperative' that conductors are socialised into recognising their own teaching difficulties as opposed to the child's learning difficulties, and must therefore create conditions under which the child is enabled to learn (Sutton, 1989; Read, 1998). The conductor's status has been strengthened in the claim that children's perceptions of significant others with whom they come into contact can potentially have an enormous impact upon their development (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000).

One further positive aspect of CE is its *de-pathologisation*; children are not treated in terms of their *special educational need* which may in itself be debilitating (SCOPE, 2000); rather their current abilities and potential are the conductors' main focus, with development of intrinsic motivation being continuously encouraged. The pedagogy employed by CE aims towards dynamic inclusion, whereby a child can be afforded the basic motor, social and cognitive problem-solving skills considered vital for mainstream inclusion (Sutton, 1986; 1996; 1999).

However, CE as practiced at NICE is not freely available in the United Kingdom on the following grounds. First, a placement there costs almost twice as much per capita as a special school placement. Second, NICE includes an independent special school and is therefore not under the jurisdiction of Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Both of these reasons promote the claim of insufficient financial resources, inappropriate use of limited financial resources, or that adequate provision may be found in borough as a reason for not funding this option (Morgan, 2004). Third, CE is still a relatively new pedagogical practice in the United Kingdom and is therefore viewed by some as an unsubstantiated, unproven approach that threatens the status quo of therapeutic professionals (Taylor and Emery, 1995). More importantly, its acceptance in the United Kingdom appears to be pivoted upon proof of its superior effects over conventional approaches (Owens, 2000). Parents must therefore, as a result, justify their preference for a placement at NICE as an appropriate choice for their child (Owens, 2000).

A review of the literature reveals many contrasting findings, illustrated by negative evaluation reports and positive parental experiences. Much British research has concentrated on evaluating the effectiveness of CE in its own right and also when compared with more conventional forms of therapy (Cochrane et al, 1991; MacKay et al, 1993; Hur and Cochrane, 1995; Hur, 1997). Evaluation studies have also been conducted in other countries such as Germany (Weber and Rochel, 1992) and Australia (Sigafoos et al, 1993; Coleman et al, 1995; Bochner et al, 1999). Yet other researchers have attempted to evaluate CE by comparing practices between countries (Stukat, 1995). What these studies have in common is their conclusion that CE is no more effective than conventional forms of therapy for children with motor disorders.

Moreover, the much-cited negative report by Bairstow et al (1993), which states that a placement at NICE is no more effective than a special school placement coupled with additional therapeutic interventions, has done much to influence notions about the practice of CE in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, recent meta-analyses have also concluded that CE is no more effective than other forms of treatment (Reddihough et al, 1998; Pederson, 2000).

But what these studies have failed to take into account is the effectiveness of CE, not with respect to clinical factors, rather the child's family and social factors. Moreover, Appleton

and Minchom (1991) advocate that one further factor should be given priority in measures of effectiveness of any intervention, that of parental confidence in their own ability to 'act as advocates for their child in the complex and punishing environments of special educational provision' (p.35). Certainly, these dynamics need to be considered and many professionals and researchers in the field of childhood disability now strongly recommend that future research should avoid evaluation set in a narrow framework of programme evaluation (Catanese et al, 1995; Llewellyn et al, 1997; Sutton, 1998; Owens, 2000).

Other researchers in the area argue that certain facilities, CE for example, should be available as a right and should not have to meet stringent scientific tests of their 'effectiveness', while others argue for ecological and contextual systematic studies of the child and family through multi-method studies (Llewellyn, 1999).

Accordingly, researchers have focused on the experiences of parents of children who have received or who are receiving CE. Some studies have investigated the viewpoints of parents who have taken their children to the Peto Institute in Budapest (Hill, 1990; Mackenzie et al, 1991; Read, 1992), while others have studied parents' experiences of CE in Australia (Cooper, 1986; Sigafoos et al, 1991) and Sweden (Lind, 2000). Researchers in the United Kingdom have also investigated parents' viewpoints (Hur and Cochrane, 1995; Read, 1995; Lie and Holmes, 1996; Llewellyn, 1999; Owens, 2000).

Many of these studies have reported increased parental satisfaction in their child's progress gained through close involvement with and participation in CE. This suggests that there is much discrepancy between negative scientific research findings and positive findings from studies of the personal expectations and experiences of those individuals involved in CE. Such positive findings also show how parents have sought and gained much information on the practical application of CE. However, one striking finding is that parents believe that certain professionals themselves possess limited knowledge of CE. For example,

> *'professionals tend not to have any experience of conductive education but nevertheless do not hesitate to give their views, even in the absence of any real knowledge'* (Read, 1995:42),

> *'you ask some local professionals about the approach and you get a very mixed reaction. Some don't seem to know anything at all*

> *about it, some are extremely dismissive saying that it's nothing special, some say they're trying to keep an open mind but warn you not to search after miracle cures'* (Read, 1992:29).

Rationale

The authors contend that this lack of substantial knowledge may be the crux of the problem, relating to why parental choice of CE is often denied, and therefore needs to be investigated. Taylor and Emery's (1995) study of professionals' knowledge of CE found that 40% of professionals involved in the study exhibited uncertainty or lack of knowledge of the basic principles of CE. However, an overriding omission was to incorporate individuals involved in the statementing process for children with special educational needs (SEN). It is important to explore the understandings and experiences of education administrators as these individuals manage children's access to educational resources and school placement during the statementing process, therefore having a significant involvement in a child's educational future. Furthermore, notwithstanding an appeal to the SEN tribunal (DES, 2001), LEA administrators possess the ultimate decision-making power over school placement.

Recent legislation advocates parental involvement and choice in the statementing process for children with SEN (DfE, 1996; DES, 2001) and, simultaneously, alternative pedagogical practices for many different childhood conditions (autism, for example) have appeared in the United Kingdom. Parents of children with motor disorders now potentially have more choice in their child's education. But previous research has shown that some parents who have stated their preference for CE at NICE are usually refused (Owens, 2000), demonstrating that 'choice' may be political rhetoric rather than a practical reality. A review of the literature surrounding the statementing process shows it is clear there is little research that explores the experiences of education administrators from their own perspectives. The question that drove the research sought to explore parental choice from a qualitative perspective to elicit what happens during administrative decision-making for parents who state their preference for CE, specifically to explicate just why a placement at NICE is usually refused.

The Study

Because the study sought to explore and describe the experiences of education administrators, a grounded theory method was undertaken, as this method of enquiry offered the means to explore a little known area and to generate theory from gathered data. It also allowed an in-depth understanding of the issues involved in allocating school placements for children with motor disorders from the viewpoint of administrators themselves. Specifically, a constructionist version of grounded theory was employed (Charmaz, 1990; 1995; 2000) in which the developing theory was informed by the active participation of the researcher.

Contrary to the original conception of grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), other versions of grounded theory have since developed that reflect the many different epistemological positions of researchers. For example, Charmaz (1990; 1995; 2000) introduced a social constructionist version of grounded theory, arguing that categories do not *emerge from data,* rather they are *constructed* by the researcher through the process of interaction with the participants and with data themselves. This is based on the precept that categories cannot emerge from data because they have no existence prior to the process of categorisation. The acts of categorising and conceptualising data are those in which the researcher is implicated and is indeed a vital contributor. This being so, categories and concepts generated through the interplay between the data and the researcher are inherently socially constructed.

Semi-structured interviews

Data collection was achieved via semi-structured interviews, an approach used widely within qualitative research (Smith, 1995; Willig, 2001). The need to produce an interview schedule forced the researchers to think about issues that might be relevant to respondents, and also to consider areas of difficulty that might have been encountered during the interviews. By using exploratory open-ended questions, each interview was guided by specific subject areas to be addressed, but also allowed the interviewer to engage with the respondents' own line of thinking and to spontaneously probe more interesting and pertinent areas.

The interview schedule was therefore generated through studying relevant literature on childhood disability and education provision (including CE) and previous research that

focused on the perceptions and experiences of parents of children with SEN. It was considered sufficient for a grounded theory methodology to survey a limited body of literature in these areas as the researchers' constructions of respondents' experiences should not be clouded by attempting to fit these experiences into some pre-existing theoretical framework. Rather such a review allowed the formation of questions pertinent to the subject area.

The initial schedule was steadily modified and more focused for use with each subsequent respondent as data analysis progressed, in line with theoretical sampling procedures of grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990; 1995; 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Respondents

The goal of the research was to explore education administrators' experiences of the statementing process and school selection in depth. Therefore a considerable amount of time was spent interviewing a small number of self-selected individuals. Nine interviews were performed with education administrators working in SEN divisions within LEAs in the Midlands area of England. Essential criteria for inclusion in the sample were that individuals must have been currently either directly or indirectly involved in the statementing process. The job titles of respondents were as follows:

- Strategic Manager, Parent and Learner Support
- Team Leader, SEN Services, Operations Manager
- Head of SEN
- Mainstream Advisory Teacher for the Physically Impaired
- Deputy Chief Educational Psychologist
- Chief Education Services Officer
- Principal SEN Officer
- Parent Partnership Officer
- Principal Statements and Review Officer

Our respondents held positions in a number of education authorities where a varicty of differing job titles covered the same area of work and responsibility. To avoid confusion we refer to them collectively as education administrators. Education administrators are

defined for our purposes as the staff within LEAs that are ultimately responsible for constructing and writing a child's statement of SEN. These statements are based on the various reports commissioned from the health, educational and medical professionals such as psychologists and paediatricians.

Education administrators were considered to be 'elite' respondents. Marshall and Rossman (1999) use this term to refer to individuals who are 'influential, prominent and/or well-informed people in an organisation or community; they are selected for interview on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research' (p.113). Therefore, it was evident that administrators of all levels of seniority working in SEN divisions of LEAs could be identified as elite respondents. The main advantages for this research were that they provided a wealth of valuable information due to the positions they held within the authorities. In addition, as well as being able to share their own personal perspectives, they were familiar with the financial, legal, historical and strategic aspects of the authorities, and in some instances had knowledge of classroom practices. This provided essential contextual information.

The acquisition of such a diverse sample in terms of job status was a particular strength of the procedure, as each respondent was able to provide insight from a different perspective that enabled the overall grounded theory analysis to be deep and integrated.

Texts for analysis

Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible upon leaving the interview situation, the transcribed material forming the basis of texts to be analysed. Overall, the total length of recorded interview time amounted to nine hours and twenty-eight minutes. As the data set was large, the research was approach with a view to using the computer software package NUD*IST5 (N5) (Richards, 2000) as a tool with which to aid in the storage and retrieval of gathered data. The texts were therefore imported into N5 for the purpose of coding in line with grounded theory procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), and analysis began immediately after importing the first transcript. N5 was found to be limited in its applicability and its use did not preclude constantly re-reading transcripts and repeatedly listening to the tape-recordings.

Findings

A brief synopsis of the grounded theory findings will first serve to provide a snapshot glimpse of the experiences of education administrators. The core category was identified and constructed as 'conflict resolution', but this was a highly complicated matrix of interrelated concepts and, because of its significance in its own right, is therefore not the focus of this paper, and is disseminated elsewhere (Morgan, 2004). A detailed analysis of the second major finding, 'inconsistent knowledge', will then serve to explain why a placement at NICE for children with motor disorders is sometimes refused.

Synopsis of findings

Against the backdrop of the recent market force approach to education, and within the context of contemporary rhetoric and practice of inclusion, education administrators articulate their daily work in terms of conflict. Parental knowledge of and preference for CE, and their involvement in the statementing process, intervenes to alter the impact of these interactive and contextual effects. Such knowledge and involvement therefore affects the level of conflict experienced by education administrators, particularly when compared with their own knowledge and experience of CE. In response to these intervening conditions, administrators act and interact by continually negotiating to offset both perceived and real sites of conflict. The core category was therefore constructed as 'conflict resolution', as data showed that this appeared to be the crux of decision-making within the statementing process. The consequences of this matrix of interacting conditions are that education administrators search for equity for all children with SEN, inherently comparing a decision for a particular child with that of another, in order to procure a sense of balance. Such decisions are seen, from the perspective of education administrators, to be pragmatically objective and legitimate. Yet this, in turn, enables parental choice of a placement at NICE to be met or denied.

This then provides a brief outline of the matrix of interrelated findings. The secondary major finding is that there exists no consistency in knowledge of CE between education administrators. For example, educational psychologists possess substantial knowledge of diverse childhood disabilities and related pedagogies due to their specialised training and through their close involvement with schools. This was evidenced in interviews with an educational psychologist, a head of SEN who had prior experience as a deputy head teacher and also with a strategic manager who was also a trained educational psychologist.

But this was not so for assessment, statements and review officers, who displayed a certain lack of knowledge. The data showed that such a lack of knowledge and understanding is due to limited training opportunities.

The following two sub-categories of 'inconsistent knowledge' were viewed as based upon 'training' and 'administrators' knowledge of conductive education', and data within these sub-categories explain why limited training and therefore understanding of childhood conditions and their related educational options may impact upon decisions of school placement.

Sub-category 1 - Training

In order for children with SEN in general and motor disorders in particular to have the best possible educational experiences and therefore social and life opportunities, it is essential that they have access to the most appropriate school to suit their present and future needs. The authors consider that previous and future training opportunities for those individuals involved in the statementing process should be examined to assess the appropriateness of their engagement in the decision-making process. The data provided evidence to suggest that training was particularly sparse and, indeed, unwarranted, as far as administrators were concerned. However, some respondents articulated the need for training.

Administrators on the sharp end of statement construction itself possess insufficient and incomplete knowledge of either childhood disabilities or related pedagogies due to limited training opportunities. When asked about prior training, one respondent stated,

> *'it is very brief. I've got a degree in psychology...but I've had no, I don't know what training you'd have to be a principal statements officer, there aren't any set courses'.*

It came to light during this interview that there would shortly be a vacancy for a statementing officer in the SEN division of the LEA. Requirements for the post included that applicants should be a graduate, with 'some' experience of working for the local authority (such experience might be in the housing department, for example).

> *'When we advertise, which we will be doing soon, we'll be looking for obviously a degree qualification, someone who can throw a couple of sentences together, in English, grammatically, but I don't think that you've got to have this, this and this*

> *qualification...it's better if somebody comes from maybe an educational background when they've done some work in education rather than in, say, housing, but then I worked in housing for eighteen months, so...'.*

The same respondent went on to explain, as did many others, that once *in situ* there are very little specific training courses related to the specific area of work of statementing and review. Although sporadic opportunities are offered for training in childhood medical conditions, attendance is not mandatory. This seemed to be consistent across the LEAs studied.

> *'LEA officers don't tend to go on very many courses that allow them to become more specialised in special needs',*
>
> *'what we don't actually end up doing is doing any research or any in-depth sort of thinking or going through and finding out what other agencies are doing or finding out about institutes and what they have to offer',*
>
> *'there isn't any specific training that I've ever undertaken or been involved in'.*

Importantly however, it became apparent that some respondents considered the need for further training to be high,

> *'if we're not going to make time for training...then there's no way [inclusion] could possibly work, and likewise with ourselves, the more we come across difficult situations and the more we...get more and more involved, then yes, we do need to expand our knowledge base, because the more you obviously know about what you're talking about, the better placed you are in resolving that issue',*
>
> *'we could all do with developing our knowledge base and we could all do with embracing more...'.*

However, there is one proviso,

> *'...but it's how do you fit that in to the strategic planning, or with reviewing this, or with developing this, we're changing this, we're changing that'.*

To briefly summarise, education administrators could potentially be appointed on the basis of their academic qualifications and work experience but such work experience does not

necessarily have had to be in the area of SEN or education. Moreover, subsequent training is arbitrary, often desired, but pragmatically problematic.

However, educational psychologists, by the very nature of their substantial training, appear to be the exception to the rule when compared with others involved in the statementing process and appear to be best placed to know what is the most appropriate educational option for children with motor disorders. One respondent described the route towards chartered educational psychologist status as encompassing a minimum requirement of at least two years teaching experience prior to taking the Master's degree in educational psychology,

> *'I think the majority of newly qualified EPs have followed that sort of progression from first degree in psychology, PGCE, teaching experience, Master's degree'.*

Here there is clear evidence of a thorough training and close involvement in children's needs, both theoretically and practically. Recommendations made by an educational psychologist towards a child's statement are therefore based on sound knowledge and experience gained through professional training, something lacking in most other SEN administrators.

Sub-category 2 - Administrators' knowledge of conductive education

The inconsistent training evidenced between administrators involved in the statementing process inherently leads to inconsistent knowledge of the diverse alternative educational options available to children with SEN. The study sought to explore education administrators' knowledge of CE as this was thought to directly impact upon a positive or negative decision regarding a placement at NICE.

During discussions about CE, a characteristic reply to the question 'what do you understand about conductive education?' was negatively expressed,

> *'not an awful lot, because a lot of our children who could possibly end up in an environment like the conductive education institute would be very much dealt with by our complex and profound learning difficulties school that has intensive support from [health professionals]...I personally don't know an awful lot about what they [NICE] do',*

this respondent going on to explain that the assessment panel of the SEN division would rely heavily upon reports from NICE and the authority's educational psychologist prior to making a decision.

Some respondents displayed an understanding that the way in which CE is practiced at NICE is fundamentally different from practices in special schools that claim to offer CE,

> *'Q: Do they follow the same principles of conductive education [as NICE] there [special school]?*
> *A: Not wholly, not to that extent obviously',*
>
> *'oh, none of our schools are providing conductive education as NICE would provide it'.*

Although educational psychologists were expected, and in the main were *found, to* have a thorough knowledge of CE, when asked what differences there might be between CE as practised at NICE and motor based learning as practised in some special schools, one respondent replied,

> *'I'm not up-to-date with the approaches they're using...I can't really answer this one. I don't have enough information'.*

Still another administrator claimed that,

> *'[name of special school] can do what it is that the National Institute say that they're doing'.*

However, alternative practices such as motor based learning, although deployed by a qualified conductor, are not an exact replication of CE as practised at NICE for many reasons, and this respondent, although initially claiming no knowledge of the fundamental differences, later acknowledged these differences, going on to explain,

> *'the way conductive education operates is much more traditionally in line with the Peto method...it's a very total programme...from morning 'till night, it's a lot of*

> *guided physical movement linked to the sort of the music and the poems and so on, whereas the motor based learning is less rigid in that sense'.*

The philosophy underpinning CE is that of developing orthofunction (the ability to perform daily life skills and problem-solving techniques via appropriate physical movement and cognitive development) through enhancing intrinsic motivation within the child in its holistic approach. In this interview extract, although a basic understanding of CE's practical aspects are evidenced, knowledge of its cognitive and ecologically relevant determinants are absent. However, one point is clear, that CE is a *'very total programme'*, it is holistic, an important feature preferred by many parents and certainly not offered within motor based learning in a special school environment.

Such diverse and inconsistent understanding begs the question as to how can education administrators (assessment, statementing and placement officers) allocate a school when possessing very little knowledge of the actual needs of children with motor disorders, and even less understanding of alternative pedagogies that are available to them, due to limited training? It is therefore understandable that problems also arise during discussions between administrators and parents throughout the statementing process, as parents are often more informed about CE than are administrators (Owens, 2000). Previous literature has shown that when a placement at NICE is refused, some parents are able to contest that decision by bringing their case to the attention of the SEN tribunal, but these actions are usually brought about by the more articulate and politically aware parents. It is therefore hardly surprising that some discrimination will occur in school allocation whereby some parents of children with motor disorders are granted their preference of NICE, whilst others are not.

Finally, it would be fair to say that these findings echo the sentiments of Taylor and Emery (1995) in that,

> *'the range of misconceptions among [education administrators] does, at the moment, inhibit the development of...choice for parents' (p.16).*

A cautionary note

In line with a social constructionist perspective (Charmaz, 1990; 1995, 2000), it must be noted that the preceding analysis has been constructed through the interplay between the researcher and data, and the analysis is therefore presented as one 'reading' of the text. It is acknowledged that readers might make their own, equally valid, interpretations. Although grounded theory does not intend to generalise (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), the findings may be transferred to similar contextual conditions in which education administrators working in LEAs in various localities throughout the United Kingdom may evince equally (dis)similar understandings of CE.

The study may not be viewed as a systematic scientific investigation of a phenomenon, however the qualitative nature of the enquiry has enabled insights not easily revealed by a more stringent exploration, and is therefore highly relative, important and context-specific.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that education administrators accomplish their statutory statementing duties from diverse bases of training, knowledge and experience of childhood disabilities and educational alternatives, performing their duties as they do based predominantly upon administrative competence. Importantly, education administrators possess tacit understandings of alternative pedagogies, such understanding developing from discussions within their own teams and offices, rather than substantial training and experience. Yet they still appear to be prepared to make value judgements, statements about CE and placement decisions based upon this.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that decisions of school allocation for children with motor disorders are inconsistent, leading to disagreement between LEAs and parents, parental dissatisfaction with the statementing process and subsequent costly appeals to the SEN tribunal. Lack of financial resources is usually cited as the major reason for denying a placement at NICE (Morgan, 2004), but this might now appear to be a more accepted and rational justification, which instead perhaps refers to both temporal and localized diversity in financial planning, given the findings from this research which emphasise uncertainty and misunderstanding.

It is apparent from this research that education administrators are restricted in their expertise; their knowledge base is focused entirely upon the statementing process itself. Our respondents acknowledged that their experience and understanding of the universe of presenting conditions and available interventions was very limited. It would be reasonable therefore to expect that education administrators working in this area develop a baseline of knowledge concerning the key disabilities and just as important, the full range of settings, treatments and pedagogies that might serve those affected.

Similarly, such staff might be expected to undertake the kind of continuing professional development that has become mandatory for many of the professionals with whom they interact. In meeting the requirement for continuing professional development of staff, opportunities to interact with the various professional bodies, researchers and provider institutions such as, for example, NICE, could be organised on a regular basis. By inviting external speakers for training days and seminars, education administrators would have the opportunity to develop and renew their knowledge base, whilst making contacts with researchers and providers of interventions that otherwise they might not meet.

In this way, education administrators would develop a sound knowledge base leading to better informed decisions on school placement, gained through more appropriate qualifications and experience. Subsequently, a thorough knowledge base coupled with on-going training would help to minimise discriminatory practices whereby more parents might be granted their choice of CE. Relationships between education administrators and parents would be enhanced through shared understandings and real partnership, consequently leading to a decrease in costly appeals (in terms of finance, time and effort). This in turn would free up valuable financial resources in order to grant parents more choice with which governmental policy purports to engage (DfE, 1996; DES, 2001).

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